GERALDINE;

OR,

Modes of Faith and Practice.

A TALE,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY A LADY.

There is no virtue more amiable in the softer sex, than that mild and quiescent spirit of Devotion, which, without entangling itself in the dogmas of Religion, is melted by its charities and exhilarated by its hopes. COWPER.

To be good and disagreeable, is high treason against virtue.
ELIZABETH SMITH.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL AND W. DAVIES,
IN THE STRAND;
AND W. BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH.

1820.

GERALDINE.

CHAPTER I.

Geraldine, on retiring to her room, was disposed to indulge in serious reflection. The warning voice of Mr. Maitland still sounded in her ear; and she felt that she was treading on dangerous ground. The instructions and example of her beloved mother occurred to her mind with overwhelming force. What effect had they produced? She was living without reluctance in the neglect of many positive duties, and could not but acknowledge that the nicety of conscience, the purity of principle, so carefully cultivated by her mother, were already weakened and contaminated.

She covered her face with her hands, and wept bitterly!—But it was not too late. A powerful conviction of her own responsibility still remained: she still felt the value and importance of time as connected with eternity; and, again and again she resolved to regulate her conduct by her own sense of duty, not by the example and maxims of those around her. Alas! Geraldine made this resolution in the solitude of her chamber; but it was to be put into effect amidst the seductions and temptations of the world.

Circumstances seemed to conspire against her. Mr. Beresford, who still appeared restless and melancholy, was persuaded by Mrs. Mowbray again to try the relief of travelling, and decided upon making a tour through Italy and Switzerland. Geraldine earnestly entreated to accompany him, but this scheme was seriously opposed by Mrs. Mowbray: she thought her too young to undertake such a journey, unaccompanied by a female friend, and where

could a suitable one be found? It was therefore determined that she should remain with Mrs. Mowbray till her father's return, when her education would be completed, and she would be of an age to preside with propriety over his establishment. —Geraldine submitted with reluctance to this arrangement; she had a secret dread of the effect which would be produced on her own mind by the habits and opinions of the Mowbray family, and occasionally felt strongly inclined to communicate her scruples to her father,—but here, the habitual deference she had acquired for him interfered. Could she presume to suggest an objection which he did not appear to feel? Would not the detail of her fears and scruples convey a tacit reproach, and perhaps create in his mind a feeling of uneasiness and perplexity, which might press painfully upon spirits already broken? Woodlands, too, and its inhabitants, had many claims upon her affection and gratitude; and, young as she was, would it be right to erect

herself into a judge of their conduct, and point out deficiencies which seemed to have escaped her father's attention? Never for a moment did she allow herself to suppose that his blindness proceeded from indifference to the subject itself. But though Mr. Beresford had been a most attached and affectionate husband, though he admired the lovely and touching effects of piety as they appeared in the character of his wife, he was far from attaching the same importance to religious education and habits, or to religion itself. He contemplated it as something admirable and estimable, where it happened to be found; but he did not consider it of vital and essential consequence. He connected no idea of danger with the want of it; and seemed, upon the whole, to think it the felicity of a peculiar temperament,—a sort of natural gift, (like uncommon sweetness of temper,) attractive and beneficial; but rather a distinguishing and valuable endowment, than an ingrafted principle. He had contemplated Mrs. Be-

resford, not as a Christian, influenced by an active powerful principle, producing certain and salutary effects, but as one of those pure and highly-gifted beings, fit to be "enskied, and sainted;" and that the world in general should resemble her so little, he considered not at all more extraordinary than that the daisy should be less fragrant than the rose, or the grass of the field less beautiful and majestic than the forest oak.

He delighted to trace in Geraldine a resemblance to her in mind and manner: the same gentle and feminine softness, the same simplicity and freedom from pretension and affectation were apparent: and he believed that a residence in a family as lively and intelligent as that of the Mowbrays would be peculiarly advantageous, inspiring cheerfulness and inducing exertion in a character naturally timid and retiring.

By this arrangement he flattered himself that her happiness and improvement would be secured: and after a short time passed

in preparation he set out on his intended tour.

Geraldine pleaded so hard to be allowed to accompany him to Dover, that Mrs. Mowbray, though she declared it to be a very foolish scheme, could not resist her solicitations, and she was indulged in the melancholy pleasure of remaining to the last moment with her father; of watching with streaming eyes and beating heart the vessel in which he had embarked gradually recede, till only its white sails were visible, then lessen into a dusky spot which soon disappeared in the haze and indistinctness of distance. Slowly and reluctantly she turned her eyes from the glittering waves, and obeyed Mrs. Mowbray's summons to re-commence their journey.

This lady was too decidedly a woman of the world to retain much acuteness of feeling. The fears and thousand vain imaginings which combined to distress a tender and youthful mind at such a moment, had no power over hers; but though she did

not in any degree participate the feelings of Geraldine, she had too much good sense and good temper, not to understand and pity them.

She allowed her therefore for some time to weep quietly and uninterruptedly in the corner of the carriage, without making a single remark upon the inutility of her tears or the weakness of self-indulgence; and waited patiently till her feelings were exhausted, before she attempted either to cheer or amuse her. Then by judicious kindness of manner and easy play of conversation, insensibly detached her thoughts from the parting scene, and directed them to surrounding objects.

Geraldine felt too grateful for Mrs. Mowbray's kind exertions to allow them to be unsuccessful: she exerted herself in return; her spirits gradually revived; and by the time they reached Woodlands, had risen from serenity almost to cheerfulness.

CHAP. II.

The visible reluctance with which Mr. Spenser had taken his leave, excited a very proper degree of sympathy in Mrs. Mowbray, which she expressed, by requesting that he would join their party, with Montague, at the ensuing Christmas. The invitation had been promptly accepted, and appeared to afford material consolation to Mr. Spenser.

It was observed that Fanny hailed the frosts and snows of December with peculiar animation; and that her lightness of heart, and gaiety of spirits, evidently increased, with every decreasing day. Indeed, towards the approach of Christmas, there was so much of the restlessness of joy, and the flutter of hope, in her manner, that it

could not escape Mrs. Mowbray's attention; and she began carefully to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of an alliance between Mr. Spenser and her daughter. It was certainly inferior to her hopes and wishes. A private gentleman, with two thousand a-year, was a poor exchange for a peer with fifteen. It was true the gentleman was a man of genius,—the peer only a peer: but genius, though attractive, was by no means, certainly, beneficial, as a conjugal quality; it was not always manageable. Now a peerage was decidedly a very good thing of its kind!

It was in vain to regret the past. This had been said a thousand times over, in different ways, by philosophers and moralists. Mrs. Mowbray acknowledged, as they did, that "*les malheurs passés, ne sont bons qu'a etre oubliés*;" and yet she heaved many a sigh in private, when she thought of the past, and Lord William.—She knew, however, that Fanny heaved no sighs about the matter; and that she

had sufficiently proved her determination of deciding for herself on all similar occasions. This secret conviction materially assisted Mr. Spenser's cause.

Fanny, with all her airy playfulness, and smiling good humour, was in fact an uncontrollable, unpersuadable person, who laughed at the old-fashioned notions of filial obedience, and personal sacrifices.

That she was exceedingly attracted by Mr. Spenser, was not to be doubted; that she would refuse him if he were equally attracted, and things came to so critical a point, could not be expected.

Mrs. Mowbray, therefore, nicely balancing probabilities, possibilities, and certainties, thought it best to throw no useless impediments in the way. As far as she was concerned in the business, "the course of true love" might, for once, "run smooth." Whether Mr. Mowbray had traced Fanny's evident exhilaration to its right cause, she could not precisely determine; but she felt anxious to evince her

own penetration, and ascertain his sentiments.

The next morning, Fanny proposed to Geraldine and Mademoiselle Dubourg a long walk, immediately after breakfast.

"Don't you think, my dear," said Mrs. Mowbray, as soon as they had quitted the room, "that Fanny is looking remarkably well?"

"She looks very well," replied Mr. Mowbray; "but as, to the best of my recollection, she has scarcely ever looked otherwise, I cannot agree with you in thinking it remarkable."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray, "that the peculiar animation expressed in every attitude, the gladness which lights up every feature, should entirely have escaped your attention? I am sure you might study the tale of Eyes and no Eyes, with prodigious advantage."

"Don't trouble yourself to devise remedies for my infirmities, my dear," replied Mr. Mowbray; "if you favour me

with a hint of what you desire me to infer from this extraordinary animation, it will do as well as if I, like yourself, possessed the faculty of second sight."

"Surely, the inference is too obvious to require a hint," replied Mrs. Mowbray.

"You are wrong," observed Mr. Mowbray, "to measure my perceptions by your own. Some good-natured genius may have touched your eyes as he did those of Mirza; and whilst I see only the cattle feeding on the plains of Bagdad, you may be gazing with astonishment and rapture on the wondrous vision revealed to you."

"No," said Mrs. Mowbray, "charm and talisman would be superfluous here. I have only to trace the effect to its cause."

"Simple as that operation appears," returned Mr. Mowbray, "I have known people blunder about it strangely."

"This is rather too plain a case to be puzzling," replied his lady: "it is not

less certain, than that light flows from the sun."

"Your illustration is rather unfortunate, my dear," said Mr. Mowbray; "for that is a point philosophers have not yet determined. You see how easy it is to call that certain which is only apparent."

"Oh! pray don't attempt to force me with you into Doubting Castle," replied Mrs. Mowbray, laughing; "you, and your friends the philosophers, may have it all to yourselves. I believe it has always been a strong-hold of theirs; but I intend to be contented with the evidence of my eyes and ears."

"You must be contented, then, to be frequently deceived," said Mr. Mowbray.

"You are certainly determined to incur no such risk," retorted she; "for you refuse to make use of either."

"Endeavour to console yourself, my dear, by recollecting that you amply supply my deficiencies," returned Mr. Mowbray, "by seeing what is invisible to

other eyes, and hearing what is inaudible to common ears."

"Well, and a most enviable privilege it is," rejoined Mrs. Mowbray; "but, seriously, to return to Fanny, — do you not perceive how powerfully she is attracted by a certain expected guest of ours; and that the attraction is mutual."

"Poor Spenser!" exclaimed Mr. Mowbray, with uplifted eyes; "so you have really fixed his doom, after an acquaintance of a few days. — The Dey of Algiers, or the Pasha of Acre, are scarcely more rapid in their decisions! — The only difference is, that their cry would be, off with his head! and yours is, away with his heart."

"At any rate," replied Mrs. Mowbray, "mine is the most merciful command of the two. Men contrive to live on comfortably enough with the loss of a heart; but I never heard of their recovering the loss of a head."

"Why, the heart has a trick of getting

back again to its place, after a certain lapse of time," said Mr. Mowbray: "now the head is rather less obliging in that respect."

"However," resumed Mrs. Mowbray, "you are mistaken in fancying that I have issued any decree on the subject. That a decree will go forth, I am certain; but not from me. I reserve my strength for more important conquests! This is not worth making."

"Do you flatter yourself, then, my dear, that, with all your skill in generalship, you will have the patience to stand neuter on this occasion?"

"Yes; I shall imitate your example, as all loving and obedient wives ought to do; and let Cupid play his own game. But, pray, is this gentleman, or is he not, a favourite of yours?"

"Do you mean Cupid, or Mr. Spenser? — I can't precisely decide to which of them your question refers."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray; "I heard all you thought of Cupid above

twenty years ago: — now tell me what you think of Mr. Spenser?"

"Do you mean to ask whether I like him as a man, or as a son-in-law?" enquired Mr. Mowbray.

"Oh, one includes the other; so answer me forthwith, I implore you."

"Your conclusion is not correct," returned Mr. Mowbray: "I am *sure* I like him as a man; but I am not quite certain that I should like him as a son-in-law."

"Well; your objections? State them in a minute, or shall I state them for you? He is not rich enough?"

"Amply."

"Not old enough?"

"Sufficiently."

"Not wise enough?"

"Abundantly."

"Oh, you most incomprehensible enigma!" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray; "I will have nothing more to do with you."

"As you please: — I rejoice in being

spared the trouble of explanation," returned he.

"But, seriously," resumed Mrs. Mowbray, after a short pause, "what can be your objection?"

"I thought you had decided to enquire no farther."

"No, no, I recant, and claim the privilege of my sex."

"Well, then," said Mr. Mowbray; "I think it possible for a man to be all we believe Mr. Spenser to be, and yet I am not convinced that the happiness of my daughter would be safe in his keeping. He is engaging, ardent, enthusiastic; but whether he will be constant, kind, and affectionate, remains to be proved. He is idolatrously fond of beauty, and unable to resist its fascinations; therefore likely enough to wish, like the Jews of old, to get rid of his wife, when she no longer finds favour in his eyes."

"A formidable objection, indeed!" said Mrs. Mowbray.

"It is, at present, rather a conjecture than an opinion," observed Mr. Mowbray: "Time will either confirm or overthrow it. If this floating conjecture settle into a permanent opinion; and I see any prospect of the accomplishment of your prophecies, I shall state it to Fanny; but I shall do no more. I shall interfere no farther.—She must and she will be the arbitress of her own destiny."

Mr. Mowbray took up a book; and his lady, after musing for some time on the comparative merits of a decided temper, and a pliant one, left the room, without being able to settle the point to her own satisfaction!

CHAP. III.

THE next day was a day of happiness. It brought with it Montague and Mr. Spenser. The one in high spirits; the other rich in hope.

During the few weeks of his absence, the memory and imagination of Mr. Spenser had been indefatigable. His memory constantly recalled Fanny's beauty, grace, and vivacity; and his imagination invested these attractions with colours so bright and dazzling, that they became quite resistless. They were "the theme of day, and the dream of night:" and by the time he met Montague in London, he had quite convinced himself, that his only chance of happiness was, in a union with her.

Mr. Spenser had no family to consult on the occasion. He was an only child, and had lost both father and mother, before the age of fifteen. His guardians, who were men of fashion and of honour, took all possible care of his property, and left his principles and conduct chiefly to his own vigilance.

Under these circumstances, the habit of self-control was not likely to become very vigorous. He felt and enjoyed the freedom, which few possessed in an equal degree; and his pursuits, though chiefly indicative of superiority of mind, were always marked by the impetuosity of unrestrained and eager self-will.

As they travelled together to Woodlands, Mr. Spenser heard from Montague, that Fanny—his beautiful, brilliant Fanny, was certainly disengaged! He was also indulged with Montague's private opinion, that she had never been in love.—Never! He could vouch for her having spurned a coronet with magnanimous disdain! Her

heart was as light and free as Spenser could desire it to be: and Montague made no objection to his cruel project of ensnaring this heart! He wished him all manner of success; spoke with confidence of those little delicate finishings, and nameless embellishments of which his sister's character was susceptible, and which the finger of love alone could give. Mr. Spenser, thought it precisely what it ought to be. It was profanation to talk of improvement.

They found Fanny as lovely and blooming as high health and expected happiness could make her. She blushed becomingly at the sight of Mr. Spenser; and, as she was not, like Geraldine, in the hourly practice of such sort of things, Montague thought it a favourable omen for his friend.

Geraldine smiled as warm a welcome as ever on Montague, and took her station, as usual, by his side.

Mrs. Mowbray, kind and considerate

for every body, planned many schemes of enjoyment, and promoted more. Dinner parties without ceremony, dances in which every body might retain their favorite partner without offence, and music, during which, every body might talk without reproof,—were among the luxuries she provided, and they procured her a large share of popularity, with the young people. In short, love and novelty combined to throw so powerful a charm over the days and hours, as far as Mr. Spenser was concerned; that he was in a constant extasy! He was heard to declare that the gardens of Armida, and the grotto of Calypso must have been dull regions, compared to Woodlands; and that he would not have forfeited his visit there, to have ranged with Mahomet through the seven heavens!

Four weeks of felicity passed away; yes,—there was no exaggeration in the term. It had been positive felicity!—He might once have thought the assertion,

that "love is heaven, and heaven is love," a mere poetical flourish; but he had felt all its truth. The decisive question indeed had not passed. He had feared precipitation; he had dreaded the possibility of awaking from his enchanting dream; but all that looks could reveal, or incessant devotedness express, had been offered and accepted, with a grace the most encouraging,—a frankness the most bewitching!

Another week passed, and Montague, began talking soberly of returning to college,—of Greek odes and gold medals,—of his hopes, fears, and competitions.

Mr. Spenser seemed perfectly astonished, that such things could excite hope or fear; that man could live for any thing except love, or any body except woman; and he contrived, before the end of the week, to tell this in so happy a way, and at so happy a moment, to Fanny, that she acknowledged, the very best thing

they could possibly do, would be to live for each other.

This arrangement met with no opposition from the heads of the family. It was acceded to, with graceful courtesy, by Mrs. Mowbray, (who piqued herself, upon acting up to Lord Chesterfield's maxim, that whatever was worth doing at all, was worth doing well,) and without much hesitation, though with rather more deliberative gravity, by Mr. Mowbray,

He had a private interview with his daughter, which excited some emotion on both sides; but Fanny was decisive. She listened to his praise of Mr. Spenser's powers of mind and attractive qualities with delight; and to his fears with little alarm, and no conviction.

Five weeks' close observation of Mr. Spenser's character had confirmed the suspicions, which Mr. Mowbray had hinted to his Lady. That he loved Fanny, could not be doubted; but it was with an intenseness, which did not promise dura-

bility. It was an extravagant, impetuous, absorbing passion, rather than the tender and devoted feeling which endures when the charm and grace and loveliness of youth have faded. He looked at and listened to her rather as an object of adoration than affection: and Fanny, delighted, flattered, and captivated, unaccustomed to reflection and unpractised in the government either of her thoughts or feelings, repaid his admiration with an ardour of affection, which she sought neither to conceal nor control.

Mr. Mowbray, though perfectly aware of the fruitlessness of opposition with a character such as hers, persevered in now and then offering a few cautionary hints.

"You play your part of Goddess exceedingly well, Fanny," said he, as they were sitting together in the library; "you are not at all encumbered by your new dignity, but receive the incense so lavishly offered, with very becoming ease and grace."

"Why should I not?" replied Fanny; "it is not merely acceptable, but precious to me."

"I hope," said Mr. Mowbray," that it is not absolutely essential to your happiness; because I am compelled to hint that you are only a goddess *pro tempore*; — that the day will come, a 'day decreed by fate,' when incense and sacrifice will fail; and you must consent to descend to the level of the rest of the daughters of Eve. How are you prepared for such degradation?"

"I shall still receive the incense of the heart," returned Fanny, "that cannot be exhausted."

Mr. Mowbray shook his head. "We will hope for the best," said he; "but I believe the flame kindled on the altar of Hymen, is not always like that in the temple of Vesta,—pure, steady, and perpetual."

"Sometimes it scarcely amounts to a flame," rejoined Fanny: "who can won-

der, then, if the feeble spark be quickly extinguished."

"A single spark," said Mr. Mowbray, "often increases gradually to a bright flame; but a very fierce flame exhausts its own source, and may be reduced to the insignificance of a single spark, and finally die away."

Fanny's countenance expressed considerable emotion.

"How long, my dear father," said she, "have you thought it the part of wisdom to anticipate evil?"

"You must admit its possibility," replied Mr. Mowbray; "is it not therefore, wisdom, to be prepared for it?"

"If these be the lessons of moral philosophy," said Fanny, "I do not think them worth studying. My own is a much better system. I think it folly to embitter the present, by wasting a thought upon the future, which may never arrive, which must always be shrouded in mist and uncertainty. At any rate, if we do think on

the subject at all, it is as well to let the beam of hope cast over it a few rainbow tints."

"They fade while we look at them," observed Mr. Mowbray."

"Yes, but they are better than perpetual clouds and darkness," returned Fanny.

They were interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Spenser, and Fanny was recalled from the contemplation of the future, to enjoy the Elysium of the present.

Montague returned to college, and the rest of the family repaired to London, to adjust preliminaries. The marriage was to take place in the Spring, and jewels, carriages, and dress-makers, lawyers, liveries, and love, left few minutes of the intervening time unoccupied.

Fanny and Mr. Spenser were in so happy a frame of mind, that they felt perfectly willing to submit to the limitations which an income of two thousand a year rendered expedient; one house, one carriage must suffice.

Mrs. Mowbray's recollections of Glenmore Hall were rather painful; but Fanny pronounced the house they had chosen at Richmond in every respect admirable. It united so many advantages, comprehending all that was beautiful and attractive in a country residence, without excluding the gaieties of London.

Mrs. Mowbray was compelled to acknowledge all its conveniencies and beauties! and after rather less than the usual display of pretty reluctance on the lady's side, and rather more than the usual eloquence on the part of the gentleman, the wedding-day was fixed. They were married in proper form, by bishop and special licence. There was a due proportion of white sattin, and Brussels lace,—of beauty, hope, and happiness.

The bride and bridegroom set off for Bath;—believing themselves to be of the number of those happy few, 'the happiest of their kind, whom gentle stars unite.'—Abundance of bride-cake, compliments,

and regards circulated, and the kindest congratulations poured back in return.

Geraldine, after the bustle, attendant upon the dignity of a bride-maid was over, felt at leisure to regret Fanny exceedingly. The sight of the room she had occupied, and all the little vestiges it contained; — the work-box, that had been thought unworthy of a bride, — and the flower-stands, which had been pronounced unfit for Richmond, excited very painful emotions. It would be still more trying to return to Woodlands without her. The woods would be as beautiful, the flowers as gay, the walks as varied; but half their charm for Geraldine would be lost.

At her age she might have felt some mortification, had she guessed that these feelings were not in the slightest degree reciprocated by Fanny. The separation did not cost her a sigh, nor did a single regret of home disturb the fulness of her joy: but Geraldine knew nothing of the absorbing interest which love excites; of its

tyrannic sway over the heart, thoughts, and wishes; of its powerful and exclusive claims: she was ignorant of its despotism, and had yet to learn that the charm with which it invests the present, throws the past into oblivion, and the future into shade.

At this time letters were received from Georgiana. They expressed, in calm and common-place language, feelings as calm and common-place:—a little regret at being separated from her family; a few complaints of the tedium of the voyage; some surprise at the new house of which she was mistress; and rather a bungling description of the beautiful scenery of the country. To this was added, an account of her reception from the ladies of the settlement; of a dinner, at the governor's; during which no less than fifty men in turbans waited upon the guests; and at which the table was profusely covered, and the ladies profusely decked.

Her language, however, rose to something like animation, in describing the splendour of Colonel Harcourt's establishment. Her house was the largest, her virandas the broadest, her palankeens and carriages the gayest, her jewels and dresses the most costly, of any in the island; and as the 'crowning blessing,' Colonel Harcourt was still the same fond, adoring Colonel Harcourt that he had been in England.

His letters sounded the praises of Georgiana, in very lover-like superlatives; detailed the trifling inconveniences she had experienced during the voyage, with tender sympathy, and spoke of the admiration excited by her beauty, with all the rapture of gratified pride.

The packet, altogether, left a very satisfactory impression. Georgiana seemed to be enjoying as much positive happiness as she was capable of; and to be leading a life of complete indulgence, which left

her nothing to do, but to sit in splendid array, like the idols of the country she inhabited, and receive the homage of all around her.

CHAP. IV.

GERALDINE'S visits at Wentworth Hall, became more frequent after Fanny's marriage. Mr. Wentworth, concluding that she would feel the loss of her lively companion, pressed his invitations with a warmth and earnestness not to be resisted; but in the present state of her mind, these visits were not a little mischievous in their effects.

At Woodlands, she was in imminent danger of becoming indifferent to the subject of religion; at Wentworth Hall, of being disgusted by it.

Mr. Latimer, the curate, who succeeded Mr. Vincent, presented a striking contrast to his predecessor in opinion and manner. He was a well-bred, and rather fashionable

young man, who had taken orders in compliance with the wishes of his father; and who believed that the whole duty of a clergyman, consisted in a decent performance of the service of the church once in seven days. The intervening time he divided between hunting, shooting, fishing, and visiting. His manners were frank and easy, his conversation lively and facetious; he had compliments for the ladies, anecdotes and *bon mots* for the gentlemen, and a laugh at every body's service. He was consequently pronounced, by the elderly ladies of the neighbourhood, to be a vastly agreeable young man; by the young ladies, to be a delightful creature; and by their brothers, to be a *devilish* pleasant fellow.—Who could wonder at his popularity? He could play a rubber with the first class, sing glees with the second, and ride races with the third.

It may be imagined with how little complacency this substitute for her favourite Mr. Vincent, was received by Miss Went-

worth. His first morning call at Wentworth Hall, decided her opinion; his short riding coat and fashionable appearance, exciting a disgust in her mind, not wholly unmixed with horror. On listening to his conversation, this feeling became mingled with contempt, was quickened into enmity upon hearing him preach, and broke out into open hostility at their second or third interview.

His style of preaching differed as decidedly from that of Mr. Vincent, as his style of dress and conversation. Mr. Vincent had been accustomed to dwell exclusively on the doctrines of Christianity, rarely enforcing or explaining its practical duties; the views he himself had adopted on certain points, he earnestly wished his flock to embrace, and he frequently descanted so vehemently on the total corruption of human nature; the doctrine of decrees, and the consequent inefficacy of all human efforts; that many in his congregation felt their actual sins to be rather

the natural effect of a cause beyond their own control, than deeds to which a certain and awful responsibility was attached.

Mr. Latimer fell into no such error; his sermons indicated a most comfortable opinion of human nature, both as to its actual state and future expectations; they dwelt chiefly on the mercy of God, on the beauty of virtue, and deformity of vice. They were too fine for the poor, and too flimsy to produce much effect upon the rich; they might have been precisely what they were, 'Had Paul of Tarsus lived and died a Jew.'

Miss Wentworth listened to them, with obvious and uncontrollable impatience, and very soon openly attacked Mr. Latimer, upon what she termed his dreadful errors and barren style of preaching.

Mr. Latimer at first stared, then smiled satirically, bowed, and professed never to dispute with the ladies; but Miss Wentworth was not to be thus foiled; she said

much that was just and true in a manner the most abrupt and uncourteous; and reiterated it so unseasonably, that Mr. Latimer's bows and smiles were exchanged for aversion and disgust; and the negligence with which he at first treated her opinions, was stimulated into opposition, by her own injudicious zeal. The torch of discord thus kindled, was never extinguished; Miss Wentworth designated Mr. Latimer, as one of those unworthy shepherds, to whom the 'hungry sheep look up and are not fed;' and he compared her to the bigots of the iron times, and spoke contemptuously of female controversialists and pharisaical pretensions. There was a warfare either of words, or looks, whenever they met. Christian forbearance was unexercised, and Christian love annihilated.

Amidst all this, Helen's melancholy began to wear a deeper and more gloomy character. Miss Wentworth, dreading the influence of Mr. Latimer, watched with

additional earnestness over her sister's principles; and selected such books as she thought likely to impress her effectually; but no selection could be less judicious. Helen read of raptures and extasies which she could not feel, of instantaneous conversions which she could not comprehend; and believing the little sympathy she felt, to spring from peculiar coldness and obduracy of heart; sunk into a state of utter despondency.

Afflicted by this circumstance, and weary of the din of incessant controversy, Mr. Wentworth began to shrink with disgust from all conversation of which religion was the subject, and to take refuge in a double portion of Madeira, whenever it was started. He described his feelings with his usual simplicity to his daughter; but Miss Wentworth would not yield an iota; declaring it to be her inflexible resolution, constantly to avow and defend the truth. She la-

mented her father's blindness, in terms more vehement than decorous; and seemed to imagine that the superiority of her religious knowledge, exempted her from the common forms and common duties of society. She desired to be useful, but did not condescend to be agreeable. She never conversed; she only exhorted and declaimed; forgetting that excellent observation, that "He who advocates the sacred cause of Christianity, should be particularly aware of fancying that his being religious will atone for his being disagreeable; that his orthodoxy will justify his uncharitableness, or his zeal, make up for his indiscretion."

Religion, thus presented to Geraldine, wore so repulsive an aspect, and was productive of so much monotony and discord, that the contrast formed by Mrs. Mowbray's lively attractive manners, was at once powerful and pernicious. It was

like a transition from the dull and cheerless regions of the North, to the rich vales and flowers of Italy; and she could not but rejoice in her lot.

CHAP. V.

Mr. Wentworth having accompanied Geraldine to Woodlands, on her return from one of these visits, lamented the difference of opinion existing between his daughter and Mr. Latimer, and the constant discord it created; expressing a fear that it had prevented her visit being a pleasant one. Mr. Mowbray, who was present, listened to this observation with a triumphant smile. He rarely talked of his own opinions; but the simplicity of his friend, Mr. Wentworth, afforded him so much entertainment, that he now and then brought them forward for the express purpose of exciting his surprise, and provoking a reply. This appeared to him a fair occasion, and after declaring that

religion had been productive of more discord than love or ambition, or any other passion or principle, he stated his own sentiments without reserve. Having descanted upon them for some time, he was gratified by hearing Mr. Wentworth exclaim, "Well, you may think as you please; but, certainly, if I maintained such opinions, I should expect to go to the devil."

"The devil! — Why, my good friend, there is no such being," returned Mr. Mowbray.

"That would be excellent news, if you could but prove it true," said Mr. Wentworth. "For my part, I not only believe that there is such a being, but that he is at your elbow at this very moment."

"So you really suppose," returned Mr. Mowbray, laughing, "that what you call evil thoughts are suggested by this said being, commonly called the devil."

"To be sure they are," said Mr. Went-

worth; "you won't find him suggesting good ones, I fancy."

"Will you favour me with your reasons?" continued Mr. Mowbray, gravely, "for supposing that the devil has any thing to do with the thoughts?"

"I can give you the best reason in the world," replied Mr. Wentworth; "the Scriptures affirm it again and again."

"You believe, then, on the same authority, in the existence of witches, enchanters, and magicians," rejoined Mr. Mowbray; "for, if I recollect rightly, the one fact is as clearly revealed as the other."

"I never troubled my head much about them, said Mr. Wentworth; but they existed, or they would not be mentioned in the Bible."

"You believe *all*, then, that the Bible contains?" said Mr. Mowbray.

"Every word," returned Mr. Wentworth.

"Will you allow me to ask, *why* you believe it?" said Mr. Mowbray.

"Why?" repeated Mr. Wentworth, a little puzzled; for unfortunately he was not very well able to give a reason for the hope that was in him. "Why?—why, because it is right and proper to believe it; and because my fathers before me believed it."

"Let us be thankful, my good friend," exclaimed Mr. Mowbray, "that you were not born on the plains of India; by this time, perhaps, you would have been crushed to pieces under the car of Juggernaut."

Mr. Wentworth paused for a mir[illegible] two, as if to understand the full sen[illegible] of Mr. Mowbray's words; and then said, [illegible] am not a reading man;—sometimes I wish I had been; but I met with an observation the other day which suits you to a tittle. It was remarked of Lord Bolingbroke, that his bad practices were greatly ag-

gravated by those rare abilities of his, of which God gave him the use, and the devil the application."

"By the by"—said Mr. Mowbray, without noticing this remark, "to revert to your *protegée*, the devil, — granting, for a moment, that he really exists, it is but fair to do him justice.

"Now, I recollect no part of the Scriptures, in which ubiquity is ascribed to the devil; and if all the evil thoughts of man are to be ascribed to his influence, he must, like the Deity, be omnipresent, if not omnipotent."

"God forbid that he should be either!" exclaimed Mr. Wentworth; "he does mischief enough already."

"But, my good sir, let me appeal to your caudour," said Mr. Mowbray: "you know you ought to give even the devil his due: if he does exist, he certainly has been terribly slandered."

"Can any man in his senses think it

worth while, to defend the character of the devil," said Mr. Wentworth, with uplifted hands.

"It is merely from a sense of justice," returned Mr. Mowbray, coolly; "Satan cannot be guilty of all the mischief imputed to him, unless, indeed, you believe him similar to the Creator in power and essence."

"I would believe nothing so blasphemous, for the world." said Mr. Wentworth.

"Then you agree with me, in thinking that the devil has been shamefully traduced," said Mr. Mowbray.

"Traduced;—no, indeed: I believe, to say the least, that he has been aiding and abetting, in all the mischief that has happened, since the day Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, to this hour."

"Then he has had business enough upon his hands, to occupy twenty devils," said Mr. Mowbray. "Do you think it probable," continued he, after a pause, "that the wise and omniscient Maker of

all things, should create so mischievous a being; foreseeing, as he must assuredly have done, that he would oppose his beneficent intentions towards man, and lead millions to destruction."

Mr. Wentworth paused in his turn, on hearing this question. His simplicity was a sure guide on this occasion; it led him instantly to the right conclusion. "To tell you the truth," said he, "I think you are now getting out of your own depth, as well as out of mine. Clever as you are, you might as well attempt to take the guage of the ocean with a cockle-shell, as to solve these sort of questions. It will be all clear enough by-and-by; but a child is as well able to act as a judge, in an affair of life and death, as you, or any other mortal man, to fathom the ways of his Maker, farther than He has chosen to reveal them."

"Is it not much more consonant with the benevolence of the Deity, and much more simple and satisfactory, to get rid of the devil altogether?" said Mr. Mowbray.

"It is no such easy matter," replied Mr. Wentworth; "and, depend upon it, my good friend, you will find it one thing to disbelieve the devil, and another to get rid of him."

CHAP. VI.

The disadvantages of a residence at Woodlands, in a religious point of view, were sufficiently formidable; but Geraldine's early impressions of piety, were to be put to a still severer test.

Mr. Mowbray, during his residence in France, had formed an intimacy with a French gentleman, who, at his death, had appointed him guardian to his only son. He felt some surprise at this arrangement; but having a very able and honourable coadjutor in Monsieur D'Erneville, a Frenchman of rank; he consigned the person and affairs of his ward entirely to his management, and considered his office of guardian as little more than nominal. But he soon found himself compelled to

take a more active part. Intelligence of the sudden death of Monsieur, D'Erneville, obliged him again to visit France. His ward had entered the last year of his minority, and there were many arrangements to be made, which rendered his presence absolutely necessary.

Mrs. Mowbray, prepared to accompany him with the utmost alacrity; and as it was possible, they might be detained some time; it was decided that Geraldine and Mademoiselle Dubourg should be of the party.

More than half the young ladies of her acquaintance congratulated Geraldine upon her happy lot. They protested that they were dying to go to France; that every body, at least, *every body* who was *any body*, now completed their education at Paris. Nor were these feelings confined to the young; the great advantages of such a *finish*, were gravely enumerated, and warmly expatiated upon, by their well-bred and fashionable mothers.

Now and then, indeed, a sober matron of the old English school would shake her head, and deny the prudence of the measure; and Mr. Maitland, when appealed to as an umpire, took the liberty of questioning whether it was *quite worth while* to barter habits of piety, purity, and delicacy; for the talent of speaking French with Parisian grace and facility.

He thought the attainment dearly purchased by the sacrifice of that exquisite delicacy, so intimately connected with chastity of mind; and by the probable loss of those religious principles, which can alone guide the footsteps in the way of peace.

The fashionable ladies did not attempt to reason, either with the sober matron, or the grave Mr. Maitland; they only asked each other, what an antiquated dowager or a country curate could possibly know of fashionable education?

Mrs. Mowbray was received at Paris, by the circle in which she had before moved,

with the most flattering *empressement!* — Every body was *ravie, charmé, enchanté*, and Mademoiselle *sa niece* shared in the rapturous welcome.

Geraldine contrasted this animated reception, with the measured expressions that would have been employed in England, and felt that there was something peculiarly attractive in French manners. Mrs. Mowbray had told her, on their arrival, that she would escape all risk of being spoiled by flattery. It was the inevitable destiny of a very young lady, to be nothing, and nobody, in France. She was privileged to wrap herself up in high dresses, and to be as mute and modest as she pleased.

Geraldine had professed herself well content to submit to this destiny; but she was not called upon to exercise any forbearance. The gentlemen, though they hovered about Mrs. Mowbray as the legitimate object of attention, cast many a furtive glance of admiration on her lovely

niece; and the ladies openly complimented her on *beauté eclatante*.

'Pleasure, that reeling goddess, with the zoneless waist,' was the presiding deity, at Paris; and no one was better qualified than Mrs. Mowbray, to be mistress of the revels.

Their stay being uncertain, Geraldine was hurried with the utmost rapidity from place to place, that she might see every thing, and be every where. The mornings were luxuriously passed in examining all that was worth seeing. The Louvre, the Luxembourg, the Institute, the Royal Library, the Jardin des Plantes,—who could number their attractions? It was Geraldine's turn to be *ravie, charmée, enchantée*.

The pleasures of the evening were still more varied and brilliant. Innumerable public amusements and delightful private parties, left not a moment disengaged. Geraldine was charmed with the ease and vivacity of French conversation; and acknowledged that it abounded with inimit-

able untranslatable graces! — There was a general diffusion of cheerfulness in French society, unknown in England. The secret of being happy seemed better understood; people met without ceremony, and talked without effort; every heart appeared light, every face wore a smile. The courtesy that might mean nothing at all, was too winning not to please; and the sparkling and polished pebble appeared to Geraldine's inexperienced eyes, a valuable gem.

In this region of enjoyment she found less leisure than ever for serious duties, and her anxiety to secure it, lost something of its earnestness every succeeding day; but, though dazzled and delighted, she had been too carefully educated to conform without reluctance, to some of the Parisian customs.

The first Sunday evening, passed at the theatre, was to her an evening of misery. Influenced equally by habit and principle, she shrunk from this gross violation of the

Sabbath-day. She had been dining with Mrs. Mowbray, at the table of a French lady of fashion, and the party was suddenly proposed. The colour deepened in Geraldine's cheeks, and she cast an imploring look at her aunt; but Mrs. Mowbray would not see, and she was compelled to follow in her train.

A pang of anguish shot through her heart as she entered the theatre. In vain she looked at the smiling faces around her, she could not share their gaiety, but continued sad and silent, unawed by the reproving glances of Mrs. Mowbray; deaf to the lively sallies of her companions, and alive only to the whispers and murmurs of conscience.

On retiring to their hotel, Mrs. Mowbray rallied her on her gravity and silence: her only answer was a burst of tears. In a few minutes she was sufficiently composed to explain her feelings.

"I am not surprised at your prejudices, Geraldine," replied Mrs. Mowbray, assum-

ing an air of superior wisdom: "we are the creatures of habit and education. If you had been born and bred among the Bramins, you would have thought it sinful to kill a gnat, or eat a beef-steak; if among the Turks, it would have been a crime to drink wine, or show your face, pretty as it is; but you happened to be educated among the religionists of our own country; and they have a violent prejudice against the continental mode of getting rid of Sunday. They prefer hearing long sermons, and saying long prayers. This, you know, is all matter of opinion; but I think it would be rather indecorous at your age, to set up for a censor of the manners and customs of a whole nation. We will leave that office, if you please, to some venerable grey-headed Cato, and quietly fulfil the laws of good breeding, by remembering the old maxim: 'When we are at Rome, to do as they do at Rome.' I do not expect you, in a moment, to throw off your trammels; but I do expect you to remember that good

breeding requires us to conform to the customs of the nation we visit; and good sense that we should conform to them with cheerfulness."

She left the room after this exordium, and Geraldine could not help contrasting her deference to the laws of good breeding, with her want of deference to the laws of God. At this moment she earnestly wished herself in England, once more under the paternal roof, where, amidst blameless pleasures, had passed her happy childhood. She recalled the sabbaths she had been accustomed to spend with her beloved mother. No cheerless gloom had pervaded them; no needless austerity had clogged the wheels of time: the hours had glided swiftly away; not amidst a dissipated crowd, but in the exercise of devotion, in the gratification of benevolence, in admiration of the loveliness of nature, and in the acquisition of that knowledge, 'which maketh wise unto salvation.' She looked back to the day she had just passed, and again fervently

wished that she could escape from the net in which she felt herself entangled. But notwithstanding these feelings and convictions, the magical power of example operated imperceptibly upon her mind.

Month after month, as it rolled away, gradually weakened the power of early impressions; and her religious principles, though not extinct, became, like the beams of a wintry sun, dim, and ineffective. An entire suspension of the public duties of religion led to a careless and irregular performance of private ones. Those practices from which she had at first shrunk as profane, she learned to behold with indifference; indifference became toleration; toleration ended in enjoyment. The murmurs of conscience, partly stilled by the plea of necessity, at length died away. The spirit of the society in which she mixed, assisted the work. Whenever, religion became the subject of discussion, it was treated either with indifference, contempt, or opposition.

On one side, a gay and lively lady, would laughingly profess to be a good Catholic, because it was the fashion of the court; another, with hardy infidelity, avowed her doubts of the existence of a God.* The majority listened with gay indifference, as if they thought the matter not worth canvassing.

The very few who escaped the bewildering light of philosophy, were involved in the darkness of superstition. It is true, Geraldine listened, without conviction, to hints in favour of atheism, and plausible arguments in defence of deism. They had little power over her understanding; but she was glad to dismiss the subject of religion altogether from her mind, and to take refuge from the field of controversy, in the neutral ground of indifference.

Mr. Mowbray was detained eighteen months in France; and during this interval the manners, as well as the habits of Geraldine, underwent a considerable change All that could give exterior grace and love-

liness, all that could charm or captivate, had been cultivated with peculiar care: her figure had received the finishing touch of fashion; her mind the highest polish of elegance. The boasted amiable *legereté* of the French character had not been without its effect; it had counteracted her constitutional English reserve, and transformed the timid, shrinking manners of sixteen, into ease, grace, and self-possession.

Mademoiselle Dubourg had made her parting curtsey, and left Geraldine with the comfortable assurance, that she united *tous les talens, et tous les charmes.*

The *only* circumstance that had been entirely forgotten, was that of her being an accountable creature, gifted with an immortal spirit, and destined, after a few brief years of 'frail and feverish being,' to an eternal inheritance of joy or woe.

CHAP. VII.

MONTAGUE, who, during their absence, had been too intent upon the attainment of college honours, to pay them even a short visit, hastened to Dover, that he might welcome them on their arrival in England. He contemplated with delight and wonder the change that had taken place in Geraldine, and in the tall and graceful young woman who now received him with a mixture of dignity and ease, found it difficult to recognise the fond girl who had constantly stolen into the vacant seat by his side, and who felt secure and happy only when caressed by her dear Montague.

He thought her pre-eminently lovely, and the brotherly familiarity which before distinguished his manner towards her, was ex-

changed for an air of attentive admiration and gallantry.

Hitherto Montague had been comparatively insensible to the charms of female beauty; whatever was the favourite pursuit of the moment, occupied his mind to the exclusion of every other.

During the last three years, the sole object for which he lived had been to distinguish himself at college. He had been the triumphant candidate for many a prize; had taken a high degree; been complimented by the great and learned; and now that this stimulus was over, was reposing idly on his laurels, quite at leisure to play the lover, and lay them at a lady's feet.

Geraldine retained all her early preference for Montague; not indeed expressed as formerly, in word, look, and manner; but closely cherished in her heart.

It has been said by high authority, that there is no *falling* in love now-a-days; but never were two hearts more predisposed to slip, slide, or glide into love. During a

fine autumn passed in each other's society, this tendency became every day more obvious. Amidst rural scenes and sounds, with all the accompaniments of reading, rambling, and sketching from nature, looking at fine sunsets, and listening to fine poetry, love made prodigious strides.

Mrs. Mowbray looked on with complacency, and considered the affair as decided; but an unexpected obstacle arose in the interference of her husband.

Disavowing entirely the restraint of religious principle, he had a secret satisfaction in proving that his opinions in no degree interfered with the uprightness of his conduct, and constantly insinuated that the laws of honour, to which he yielded obedience, were productive of greater nicety than the laws of Christianity.

Before Montague had ventured to whisper his tale of love to Geraldine, his father peremptorily desired that any confession of this nature should be delayed till Geraldine was some months older, and had been

introduced into the English world of fashion.

He observed, that there was little doubt that her fine person, and the probability of her being an heiress, would attract many admirers; and he considered it neither fair nor honourable, to entangle her in an engagement before she had been allowed time to judge and compare.

This hint was quite sufficient for the lofty spirit of Montague: not for worlds would he now have spoken; and he endeavoured to look as little like a lover as possible. Under the influence of this feeling his manner became unequal; involuntary bursts of tenderness were succeeded by coldness and constraint, and Geraldine astonished at these fluctuations, resolved to conceal her own feelings with all the jealousy of maiden pride.

Mrs. Mowbray laughed at all this masquerading, as she called it; and said it was diverting enough to watch the comedy

of 'The Conscious Lovers,' for the denouement might be easily foreseen; it would end, as all other comedies did, in a union of hearts and hands.

Besides this source of disquietude, Geraldine felt considerable uneasiness respecting her father. During the first year of his absence his letters had been frequent and affectionate. The second year, they were far less regular, and written in evident haste; and now, four or five months had passed without any intelligence. At length a letter arrived, dated Florence; it was shorter, and still less satisfactory than the preceding ones; specified no fixed time for his return, but alluded to it as distant and uncertain.

To divert the chagrin and vexation which Geraldine had felt on receiving these tidings, Mrs. Mowbray talked with animation of the brilliant pleasures she was planning for the winter; and contrived so judiciously to interweave the name of Mon-

tague with these descriptions, that Geraldine's feelings of regret and disappointment gradually subsided, and a pleasant beam played over the future, thus presented to her fancy.

CHAP. VIII.

From the period of Geraldine's introduction at Woodlands, Mr. Maitland had endeavoured, whenever an opportunity offered, to counteract the influence of the circle in which she moved; by appealing to the principles that had been early instilled into her mind. These opportunities were few; but she had always listened to him with emotion and conviction. Since her residence in France, however, he observed with unfeigned regret, that her attention appeared to be the result of courtesy; rather than of interest in the subject itself; and he dreaded the effect of a winter passed amidst the dissipations of London.

On the evening preceding their jour-

ney thither, he called, to offer his good wishes and farewell compliments, and to glide in, if possible, a word of advice to Geraldine.

"I suppose, Miss Beresford," said he, "you are indulging in all the luxury of anticipation; already enjoying, in idea, the brilliant scenes to which you are so soon to be introduced."

"Yes," said Mr. Mowbray, "she seems eager enough to tread the enchanted circle, and will be as much in love as other people with all the shadows it contains. It is curious to see the same game perpetually played. To hope, pursue, and be disappointed, is alike the destiny of pretty girls, and grave statesmen."

"This result," replied Mr. Maitland, "depends more upon the objects we select, than upon the decrees of destiny. There are hopes, which cannot become dim; and pursuits which terminate in the richest enjoyment."

"Those are fortunate who can discover them," replied Mr. Mowbray. "Happiness, even if it result from visionary views and opinions, is still worth having, but Geraldine's speculations are confined to the number of hearts she calculates upon enslaving, the splendid balls she hopes to visit, and the gay dresses she intends to display."

Geraldine acknowledged that she was looking forward with delight, to the gaiety of a winter in London; but she disclaimed, with a blush, all intention of enslaving hearts; declaring that she felt neither hope nor anxiety about them.

"Of course," said Mr. Mowbray, with a sarcastic smile. "It is a matter of perfect indifference to you, and all other young ladies, after passing months and years, in labouring to become charming,—it is preposterous, to suppose, that you hope, and intend to charm."

"Youth is in its own nature so attractive," observed Mr. Maitland, "that

I have often thought it superfluous to devote so much time to the decoration of an age, rich in charms peculiar to itself. It would be wiser to provide more sedulously against that period, which is but too often dark and unlovely."

"Don't be so ungrateful, Maitland, as to find fault with this system;" said Mr. Mowbray. "If the rest of the world are disposed to condemn it, young men should applaud from gratitude, or be silent from compassion. It is too trying, is it not Geraldine, that the very persons, whom all these charms are intended to captivate, should take the liberty of questioning their value?"

"May you not be mistaken in the motives you attribute to us, Sir?" said Geraldine. "May not fashion or custom, or the pleasure of the pursuit be sufficient stimulus, without ascribing to us views so degrading?"

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Mowbray, "why trouble yourself to answer him

gravely; he knows nothing in the world of the matter. Women never charm by calculation; it is an art they possess intuitively. Miranda, in her solitary island, was as perfect a mistress of it as the finest lady in the land; and she will be acquitted, I suppose, of any design of charming Caliban."

"We will not be rash enough to deny your powers," said Mr. Maitland, smiling: "why then take so much pains to multiply attractions, when you acknowledge that Nature has made you resistless."

"That is a questionable sort of compliment, Mr. Maitland," said Mrs. Mowbray; "you really disappoint me. From you I had expected better taste."

"You have no ground for arraigning Mr. Maitland's taste, my dear," observed Mr. Mowbray. "Because he prefers the substantial usefulness and simplicity of the Tuscan Order, to the laboured finishings of the Composite, is his taste to be questioned?"

"And may we not in our turn be indulged in admiring the Corinthian, as a beautiful medium?" said Geraldine.

"It is, perhaps, more beautiful than admirable," replied Mr. Maitland; "for it loses in strength what it acquires in grace. In rearing a building, or in forming a character, strength appears to me a circumstance of first-rate importance."

"And grace of no importance?" enquired Geraldine.

"The one is essential, the other delightful," replied Mr. Maitland.

"And may they not be combined?" said Geraldine.

"The union is rare," observed Mr. Maitland.

"But not impossible," added Geraldine. "Recollect Miss Elizabeth Smith, and deny, if you can, that the lighter graces, belonging to the department of taste, may be blended with solid attainments."

"Piety and humility were the ground-work of these attainments," returned Mr. Maitland, "and much may certainly be done where there is a thorough conviction of the value of time, and a conscientious employment of it. But it was the charm, the inexhaustible charm of intellect, by which this admirable young woman was chiefly distinguished. And, after all, it is a vigorous, rich, and cultivated mind, that diffuses the most enchanting variety over society and domestic life. Accomplishments amuse an hour; but mind furnishes a perpetual regale."

"Oh! I have no patience with men of sense," exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray, "for joining in the common cant of the time against accomplishments. Why should not every talent which can embellish home, or throw an additional charm over the domestic circle, be esteemed valuable?"

"Admirable!" exclaimed Mr. Mowbray. "Neither ingenuity nor observation

would have enabled me to guess, that they were cultivated with such a view. I beg pardon of the warbling young ladies of the present day. I have hitherto fancied a resemblance between them and the Syrens of old: but I will try now to believe that they are content to waste their sweetness on their papas and mammas."

"Are they to be condemned, if they sometimes venture to please a larger circle?" asked Geraldine, addressing Mr. Maitland.

"By no means," replied he: "the only thing to be feared is, that the ear, accustomed to the whisper of adulation, and the intoxicating effect of solicitation and applause, will find the quiet approbation of a domestic party flat and insipid."

"You think, then," said Geraldine, "that women are safe only in the shade."

"Nonsense, my dear," exclaimed Mrs.

Mowbray.—"The poet tells the truth when he says—

> Small is the worth
> Of beauty, from the light retired:
> Bid her come forth;
> Suffer herself to be desired,
> And not blush so to be admired.

"A very superfluous exhortation indeed," said Mr. Mowbray, "and as mischievous as even a poet could desire it to be; however, don't alarm yourself; educated as young women now are, there is no fear of their preferring the shade. Once upon a time, Geraldine might have been content to 'blush unseen;' but you have successfully counteracted this perverted taste. She is duly prepared to dazzle and be dazzled."

"I hope," said Mr. Maitland, "that she will still be able to distinguish that which is essentially and permanently bright, from that which sparkles and glitters only for a day."

"Don't calculate upon the keenness of her perceptions;" said Mr. Mowbray. "A love of dissipation and display must spring from vanity, the besetting sin of woman; and through the mist of vanity, objects frequently appear confused, enlarged, and distorted. Lilliputians will be mistaken for Patagonians; stars appear like suns, and weeds like flowers."

"But I do not plead guilty to a love of dissipation," said Geraldine. "I enjoy novelty and variety; and do not grave philosophers tell us, that these are the chief sources of pleasurable emotion?"

"Depend upon it, my dear Miss Beresford," said Mr. Maitland, "you will find little of them in the maze of fashionable life. Its eternal sameness is the subject of incessant complaint. In the midst of its most brilliant scenes,

The heart, distrusting, asks if this be joy."

"Then," replied Geraldine, trying to shake off the seriousness that began to

steal over her; "it will not be *very* dangerous! I shall soon become weary of it." "I hope so," said Mr. Maitland, with energy. "I hope you will very soon perceive how poor and unsatisfactory are all its pursuits, compared with those higher and purer sources of enjoyment, to which you cannot be a stranger; though you have capriciously slighted them for a time. But there is some danger of your being drawn into a vortex, where perils abound, and from whence escape is difficult."

"Come, come, Mr. Maitland," exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray, as she watched the expressive changes of Geraldine's countenance; "I shall say, like Sir Peter Teazle, 'too moral by half!' After frightening her into the notion that Gorgons and Hydras, and Chimeras dire will beset her path, do pray have the goodness to show us another specimen of your art; and send them quietly to repose in the Red-sea."

"I wish I *had* power," said Mr. Mait-

land, smiling, "to lull to sleep the dragons and wizards, that haunt the steps of youth and beauty. But they must be fearlessly encountered, by those rash damsels who leave their guarded bowers in quest of amusing adventures."

"You forget," said Mrs. Mowbray, "that she will be under the guidance of the fairy Experience, and protected by a gallant young champion, who would combat half a dozen dragons, in defence of his fair cousin."

Geraldine's countenance resumed its serenity. The allusion acted as a spell; fears and doubts vanished, and the world before her was again transformed into an enchanted region, where love and joy held constant revels.

As Mr. Maitland rose to take leave, Geraldine enquired, if he had lately received intelligence of Mr. Fullarton.

"Yes, I had a most satisfactory letter from him last week;" replied he. "His health, is so nearly restored, that we may

expect him home in a few months. The letter contains many affectionate and minute enquiries concerning you. I must send him an exact portrait of you, in my next."

"It will not be a flattering one, I am sure," said Geraldine, smiling.

"It will be faithful, and, therefore, more valuable," replied Mr. Maitland.

"Am I to accept that as a compliment, or a reproof *en masque?*" said Geraldine.

"I must leave it in all its ambiguity," answered Mr. Maitland, as he shook hands with her in parting: "interpret it as you please."

Mr. Fullarton had not seen Geraldine since the death of her mother.

He had many obstacles to surmount, and impediments to encounter, in accomplishing the benevolent scheme which had induced his voyage to the West Indies; and when his plans were effected, and he was preparing to set sail for England, he was seized

with one of those dreadful fevers peculiar to hot climates, and so often fatal to Europeans. He escaped with life, but his constitution was so much shattered by the violence of the attack, that complete restoration to health appeared almost impossible.

On returning to England his physicians recommended him immediately to try the air of the south of France, and he reluctantly quitted his country, with a very faint hope of seeing it again.

The experiment proved highly beneficial. The softness and purity of the air were productive of the best effects; and his health and strength were gradually renovated.

CHAP. IX.

A SPACIOUS house, in Portman Square, had been engaged for the reception of Mr. Mowbray's family. In a few days they were comfortably settled, and the ladies eagerly engaged in preparations for the winter campaign.

Mrs. Mowbray's connections were numerous and fashionable; and a prodigious influx of visitors and cards of invitation succeeded the intelligence of her arrival in town. Her attractions, indeed, both personal and relative, were unusually powerful.

Montague, rich in natural and acquired endowments, and heir to an entailed estate, could not be thought of without complacency by discerning mothers, and disen-

gaged daughters; and Geraldine combined too many advantages, actual, and probable, not to be peculiarly acceptable to calculating fathers, and extravagant sons.

With these powerful claims on public attention, it was not surprising that Mrs. Mowbray's engagements multiplied, and that every hour brought with it some new indication of partiality.

Immediately upon their arrival Fanny became their guest, for a short time. She appeared somewhat less blooming, and Geraldine fancied, somewhat less gay than formerly. A shade of care, an expression of anxiety, at intervals clouded the serenity of that brow, hitherto so open and unruffled. But these shadows were transient, and succeeded by gleams as bright as ever.

Mr. Spenser, on the contrary, was still more lively and animated, eager to promote every pleasure, and varying them with extraordinary and successful ingenuity.

"Geraldine," said he, at their first interview, "if you wish to take care of yourself, return as fast as possible to the country. I am sadly afraid that a dagger, or a bowl of poison, will be your lot before you can get safe out of this wicked town.—You are become ten times handsomer than ever, so prepare for envy, hatred, and malice from all the ladies of the land; and the homage of the eyes and heart, from all the men of it."

Montague looked assent and admiration; and fixing his eyes on her cheek, now mantling with blushes, said, "Which do you think will be the most dangerous, Geraldine, love or hatred?"

"I am not so childish as to be frightened by shadows," replied she; "I expect to excite little of either."

"You will soon discover your mistake," said Mr. Spenser; "so prepare for the glories of conquest. To-night you begin."

"What is the plan for the evening?"

enquired Montague, who had listened impatiently to Mr. Spenser's prophecy.

"We are engaged to Lady Cotterel," answered Mrs. Spenser; "Geraldine, all the wit and eloquence you possess will be in request."

"I shall take refuge in the eloquence of silence," replied Geraldine.

"Yes," returned Mr. Spenser; "it will be sufficient for you to look like a divinity, and inspire those around you."

A by-stander might, perhaps, have discerned some symptoms of restlessness in Fanny, at these words, but they escaped the notice of the lively group assembled.

Evening came, and Geraldine, in all the loveliness of youth, and splendour of fashion, was ushered into Lady Cotterel's brilliant drawing-rooms.

The group formed by Mrs. Mowbray's party soon attracted attention; the lounging beaux drew near to look at a new face; the envious belles to criticise it. At a distance, amidst a multitude of heads, they

perceived Edmund Wentworth, endeavouring to make his way towards them; but he was seized upon by a fashionable young man, who had been examining Geraldine for some time through an eye-glass, and carried off in an opposite direction.

"Wentworth, do you know any thing of this new star that is shining upon us to-night; this Miss Beresford?"

"A great deal;" answered Edmund.

"Well, what is she?"

"A beautiful girl, which I suppose your lordship has discovered:—well-born, well-bred, and an heiress."

"A charming climax," exclaimed Lord Harrington; "but is it a certain fact?"

"Indubitable," replied Edmund.—"Listen:—can any concurrence of circumstances be more promising. She is sole heiress to a fine estate; her father in Italy, dying of a broken heart for the loss of his wife."

"Are you sure he is past all hope?"

"Positive," returned Edmund, "re-

duced to a skeleton; the mere shadow of a man."

"Say no more, my good fellow; but introduce me, I conjure you."

"By all means," replied Edmund, laughing; "your doom is fixed:—

> Let no one say, that there is need
> Of time for love to grow.

"One word, one magic word, has kindled it already in your bosom."

They approached, and the preliminary forms followed. Lord Harrington bowed; Miss Beresford curtsied.

"You have not been long in town, I presume?" said his lordship.

"Only a few days," replied Geraldine.

"I am afraid you find it shocking dull work; for there is scarcely a creature here yet. London is a mere desert till April."

"Our notions of a desert differ materially then," said Geraldine, smiling,

" You will find it necessary, I believe, Miss Beresford, to correct a great many of your notions;" observed Edmund.

" Words, now, are a vast deal more comprehensive than they were formerly. In your vocabulary, desert, probably, means only a large tract of sand, diversified here and there, with a group of Arabs and camels. Now, with us, it stands also for the metropolis of a kingdom, in a certain season, when certain families of a certain class are absent; and nothing is at work in the said metropolis, but the paltry machines of government, legislation, and commerce. I assure you, our words now, have almost as many meanings as the Chinese monosyllable *chou*."*

* Pere Bourgeois, one of the missionaries to China, enumerates some of these meanings :—" They told me, *chou* signifies a *book*, so that I thought whenever the word *chou* was pronounced, a *book* was the subject of discourse: not at all; *chou*, the next time I heard it, signified a *tree*. Now I was to recollect *chou* was a *book* and a *tree*; but this amounted to nothing; *chou* I found also expressed *great heats*; *chou* is *to relate*;

' Can you favour me with any more illustrations ?" said Geraldine, " they may possibly save me from the disgrace of discovering my ignorance."

" With half a thousand, if you please," returned Edmund; " to begin: perhaps, you have been accustomed to consider marriage a very solemn business, implying a union of hearts, and a sympathy of taste, feeling, and principle. You, probably, have imagined, that the pair who submit to the awful ceremony, must love and live for each other, like Baucis and Philemon. Now, nothing can be more erroneous. This meaning of the word is obsolete in the world of fashion; by marriage, we understand a civil contract, entered into from motives of convenience, which, under the sanction of custom, may be violated

---

chou is *the Aurora; chou* means *to be accustomed; chou* expresses *the loss of a wager*. I should never have done if I were to enumerate all its meanings."

by either party, without shame or hesitation."

"You allow, I hope," said Mr. Spenser, (who was standing near them,) "that some words still retain their primitive meaning. Satire and satirists are precisely what they were in the days of Juvenal."

"Not quite," replied Edmund. "The weapon has either lost its point and edge, by continual use, or it is less skilfully wielded. Satire, in this day, is not what it was in the days of Juvenal: for then it made men wiser; now it makes them angry."

"I am afraid, then, the good it produces is but small;" said Geraldine.

"It does no good at all," exclaimed Mr. Spenser; "for men escape it when general, and resent it when personal."

He drew Geraldine's arm within his, and leading her away, sauntered through the rooms. His acquaintance seemed universal: he had a familiar nod, or a grace-

ful bow, for most of the gentlemen; and a smile, or a compliment, for every handsome woman. The words, 'a beautiful girl? who is she?' occasionally caught Geraldine's ear, and diffused a brighter bloom over her cheek. They would have been still more gratifying had Montague been near to hear them; but Montague was engaged in a never-ending dialogue with Miss Cotterel; and there appeared to be so much spirit and playfulness in their conversation, that she had no hope of his being soon detached. It was consolation, however, to see that Miss Cotterel was short, thick, and decidedly plain. It was impossible, that the sparkling of a very intelligent pair of dark eyes could counterbalance such disadvantages.

In the interim, the remarks of Edmund Wentworth were entertaining enough.

"Look at those two ladies in green," said he, "and you will have a clear notion of the omnipotence of vanity, in

some of your sex. They fancied themselves beauties; and tried to make other people fancy it for ten years. They persevered in the siege of men's hearts, just as the Greeks did in the siege of Troy; but, unluckily, with less success; they got plenty of wounds themselves, I fancy, without carrying off a single trophy. Now, they are trying another expedient. They have taken the roses out of their hair, put on black Brutus's, and set up for wits."

"And will not the task of passing for wits, without appropriate features of mind, be quite as difficult as that of passing for beauties, without an appropriate style of countenance," said Geraldine.

"First-rate wit, is as rare as first-rate beauty, like yours Geraldine," observed Mr. Spenser; "but there are fewer good judges of wit, than beauty. Bristol-stones are often mistaken for diamonds, by common observers."

"Look to your right;" continued Ed-

mund, "those two girls in white satin, are the Miss Le Bruns, of singing celebrity. They begin to look rather disconsolate; this is the fourth winter since they came out, and the young men, have hitherto resisted the syrens; and, what is more provoking, without having recourse to tying themselves to a mast! On the contrary, they listen with rapture, and quietly walk away."

"Perhaps, you are mistaken, in fancying them disappointed," said Geraldine: "they may possibly sing to please themselves."

"No, no, Geraldine, he is not mistaken," said Mr. Spenser; "the nightingale, in her lonely woods, and the lark, soaring to heaven, may sing to please themselves; but young ladies of fashion, sing either to win hearts or fame."

"They succeed I hope, in securing fame at least," said Geraldine.

"Yes; but fame is an airy, unsubstantial sort of possession after all," continued

Edmund, "and is subject to certain penalties: in the first place, there is the anxiety of sustaining it; next, there is to endure patiently the envy excited by it; you have no idea of the effort it requires to appear magnanimously indifferent to the little disparaging hints, and faint reluctant praise, which wound and tear the sensitive heart of an amateur."

"Ah! it is very well for you to smile, and look incredulous, Geraldine," exclaimed Mr. Spenser! "You, who look like an angel, and sing like a nightingale; but you should have some compassion on those poor Le Bruns, whose voices are their sole stock in trade."

They were now joined by Montague and Miss Cotterel. There was a decision amounting to bluntness, in the tone and manner of this young lady, which sometimes created disgust, often excited surprise, and always attracted attention. Her manner to Lady Cotterel was wholly deficient in deference: to her equals it

was familiar or negligent, in proportion to the degree of favour in which they happened to stand; to all, whether superior, inferior, or equal, she said precisely what she thought; never desiring either to please or conciliate, and careless whether she attracted or repelled. This had arisen partly from an early consciousness of independence, and partly from natural frankness of disposition; there was much sterling excellence, and some originality in her character, but upon the whole, she was by no means popular with the ladies; and she felt strongly inclined to account in her own way for her popularity with the gentlemen.

Geraldine, as Miss Cotterel and Montague approached, begged to know, if the point in debate between them had been happily settled.

"No;" replied Montague, "we have fenced with admirable dexterity; proved and displayed each other's skill; made some

palpable hits; and, like other combatants, left the matter as we found it. Miss Cotterel has been trying to convince me, that you enter the world under peculiar disadvantages; that the fairies have gifted you too liberally. She contends, that the dowry of wit, wealth, and beauty, is not to be coveted."

"If men were what they ought to be," returned Miss Cotterel, "they would be invaluable possessions; but while they are what they are, I tremble for such richly gifted beings."

"Will you have the goodness to favour us with the two portraits," said Edmund; "they will be spirited sketches, I am sure, from your hand."

"No; you would call them caricatures," replied Miss Cotterel; "and they would do you no good."

"Why, it would certainly cost you some trouble to disturb my self-complacency," said Edmund.

"I flatter myself, that I am a perfect resemblance of Sir Charles Grandison, wig and sword excepted."

"In one point, I should think it rather difficult to resemble him," said Montague: "he contrived to be in love with two ladies at once. He might have sung—

How happy could I be with either."

"I can't possibly tell how he managed the matter," said Edmund; "but it certainly is practicable. Don't you think so, Spenser?"

Mr. Spenser's eyes were rivetted on a bust of Shakspeare; and he did not appear to hear the question.

"Oh! they are a sad race, my dear Miss Beresford," exclaimed Miss Cotterel. "Trust to the experience of sober twenty-five, and have nothing to do with them. Depend upon it, the hearts of men have not 'that within which passeth show.'"

"What have you expected from them?" said Mr. Spenser.

"Disinterestedness and devotedness," replied Miss Cotterel.

"And is it impossible to find them?" enquired Geraldine.

"You may have abundance of the second without the first; but united, they have scarcely ever been found, since the days of chivalry," said Miss Cotterel.

Geraldine had not heard a word of this last speech: her arm was within Montague's; she felt it pressed fondly to his side; and she banqueted deliciously on the hope, that the possession of these rare treasures was reserved for her.

"Now we are upon the subject of hearts and love, Mr. Wentworth," continued Miss Cotterel, "pray, tell me, if you have heard lately from your brother?"

"This very day," returned Edmund. "He is at Portsmouth, and will soon have the honour of paying his respects to you."

"His heart is made of very singular materials," observed Miss Cotterel; "at once combustible and inconsumable."

"It is perfect asbestos!" exclaimed Edmund, "and comes unharmed out of the midst of fire and flames."

"During his last cruize, he has been in love with a Venetian lady, a French *paysanne*, a pirate's daughter, and a discarded Sultanness. The first he adored for her fine voice, the second for her fine eyes, the third for her fine figure, and the fourth for her fine feelings."

The laugh which succeeded this speech was interrupted by Lady Cotterel.—

"My dear Emma," said she, drawing near her daughter, "you are so occupied with your favourites, that you quite forget to do the honours. There is not a creature either at the harp or piano-forte."

"What are the gentlemen about, ma'am?" said Miss Cotterel. "Solicitation is their business, I think,—not mine."

"Louisa Le Brun and Miss Crawford have been turning over the leaves of a music-book, for the last quarter of an hour," continued Lady Cotterel, in a half reproachful, half confidential whisper. — "It is cruel not to ask them to play: you know, I must attend to the card-tables."

"Mr. Spenser!" exclaimed Miss Cotterel, "do, pray, take pity upon mamma, and Miss Le Brun; and lead her to the harp."

The young lady, after playing off all Lady Heron's pretty graces; after declaring, that 'she could not, would not, durst not play,' allowed herself to be conducted to the harp.

"It would have been a pity, if all that becoming humility, had been wasted upon me," said Miss Cotterel. "I should not have rewarded it with a single fine speech. Mr. Spenser, of course, will make half a dozen." The ladies, collected in groups, near the instrument, alternately talking

to each other, and listening to Miss Le Brun. She played extremely well, and Geraldine, accustomed to the urbanity of French manners, expected to hear her performance, greeted with animated plaudits: the lady resigned her seat; but nothing of the kind followed: all thanks and praises were comprised in a whisper from her friend, Miss Crawford, and a bow from Mr. Spenser. Geraldine observed to Mrs. Mowbray, that this would never have happened in France.

"I beg you will not attribute our economy of praise to deficiency either in taste or politeness," said Edmund Wentworth: "the fact is, we pique ourselves upon being a very moral nation; we do not choose to encourage vanity; we are disagreeable upon principle." Geraldine smiled; and a comparison between English and French society succeeded.

"If you expect to meet with the ease and spirit of *bienveillance*, which characterise French society," said Mrs. Mow-

bray, "you will be disappointed; they are never found in England; they cannot be naturalised here."

"In England, people meet together in herds of three or four hundred; elbow, jostle, and stare at each other; curtsey, bow, and separate."

"I have often thought," said Miss Cotterel, "that a collection of well-dressed puppets, would answer precisely the same purpose; they would fill a room; and this is the grand object in England."

"Now, in France," continued Mrs. Mowbray, "parties are select, and the conversation always entertaining and spirited; no freezing silence; no dull pauses; no bevies of frowning politicians in one corner, and whispering coquettes in another; but a general animated interchange of thought; a never failing succession of sprightly anecdote, and gay repartee."

"Yes," said Edmund, "French conversation, like French wine, is light and sparkling; and exhilarates for a moment;

but then it only exhilarates: it does not nourish; it has no body, no strength, no richness."

"That observation," replied Mrs. Mowbray, "unravels one great cause of the habitual silence of an Englishman."

An Englishman of any talent is a great deal too anxious, to say only what is worth saying; as if we wanted always to listen to aphorisms and axioms: he could not speak with more deliberation, if every word he uttered were to be engraved on marble, and handed down to posterity, like the sayings of the seven wise men of Greece."

"You can't accuse a Frenchman of this weakness," observed Miss Cotterel.

"A Frenchman," said Mrs. Mowbray, "will never sit silent and allow himself to be mistaken for a fool."

"No," replied Miss Cotterel, "but, like some Englishmen of my acquaintance, he will open his mouth and prove himself one."

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray, laughing; "even nonsense, is better than dulness: our countrymen know nothing of the *laisser aller* of conversation; they can harangue, and debate, and argue, and discuss, but they cannot talk: a Frenchman possesses this talent in perfection, like Dean Swift, who was said to be able to write well upon a broomstick: he can talk well upon any subject. A ringlet, or a revolution; a fan, or an empire, are equally inspiring; and if he betray a little national and personal vanity, he always knows how to soothe that of his hearer. The French are certainly the vainest people under the sun; but,——" Mrs. Mowbray stopped abruptly; for she perceived a Parisian acquaintance (the Comtesse de Clairville,) advancing towards her. With perfect ease and dexterity she changed the subject from French manners to French music, which she pronounced to be deficient in pathos and expression; it might please the ear a little, but it never penetrated the heart.

The countess playfully defended French music, from the days of the Troubadours to those of Lully and Rameau. She talked of the 'melodies of Berton;' the 'charming romances of Lambert;' the 'fine harmonies of Mehul;'—but Mrs. Mowbray was still unconvinced: and, as to Lully and Rameau, she quite agreed with Rousseau in detesting their '*lourde Psalmodie.*' She begged pardon of Monsieur D'Alembert; but she could not admire Rameau.

The countess could only pity and wonder, and cast an appealing look upon the party around her.

They were quite guiltless of disliking Rameau; for they knew nothing about him. He might have borrowed the harp of Apollo himself, but they were ignorant of the tones it had produced. Music; French, Italian, German, English, Scotch, and Irish, became a theme for eloquence, and each found a warm admirer.

La belle Comtesse was solicited to in-

dulge them with a specimen of French music. She was all graceful compliance, bending over her harp in a moment. With inimitable spirit she sung the popular air of 'Le Troubadour;' and the gentlemen declared Mrs. Mowbray's opinion to be erroneous. The music and the countess were so inspiring, that they felt quite ready to sacrifice '*toute pour la gloire, et pour l'amour.*'

Geraldine was called upon for the next specimen. She selected an air of Mozart's, to which the following English words had been adapted:—

I love the shepherd's artless rhymes,
  A shepherd's joys revealing;
I love the songs of ancient times,
  Their notes of simple feeling:
They echo'd o'er my native hills,
  When last I wander'd near them;
And now my heart with rapture thrills,
  In distant climes to hear them.

When hopes, that could the heart entrance,
  On airy wings have vanish'd;
When all the dreams of wild romance,
  From memory's page are banish'd;

Such strains the heart awhile may soothe,
'Mid foreign wilds deserted;
Tho' all the joys that pleas'd our youth
Have, one by one, departed.

Sweet, as the dreams of former years,
When sleep the eye has shrouded;
Sweet, as the star that oft appears,
When all the rest are clouded;
Sweet, as the warbler's latest strain,
When storms the years have shaded;
Or lingering rose, that decks the plain,
When all the rest have faded.

The rich and melodious tones of her voice, and the tender melancholy of the poetry, produced a still more powerful effect, than the light and lively strain which had preceded it; when the last chord had ceased to vibrate, all stood for a few moments entranced, and still listening; till at length silence was broken by a faint murmur of applause, gradually rising to expressions of delight, and exclamations of rapture.

Madame de Clairville expressed her admiration in compliments of the happiest elegance. Lord Harrington whispered

something sufficiently common-place, about nightingales and seraphs; but Geraldine did not hear him: she was occupied in wondering why Montague did not form one of the admiring circle around her.

He had retired from it to enjoy the luxury of listening unseen, and undisturbed; but as he heard the general whisper of admiration excited by her beauty, doubts and fears combined to harass him: the forms of triumphant rivals crowded before his eyes, and he felt as wretched as the miser, who discovers the unsuspected value of a gem, at the moment that he is parting with it for ever.

CHAP. X.

THE next morning, as they were lounging over the breakfast-table, distributing the party of the preceding evening into the various classes of charming, mediocre, insufferable, a servant brought in letters. Mr. Spenser paused in the midst of an emphatic eulogium on the Comtesse de Clairville's bright eyes, to break the seal of one addressed to himself; its contents appeared to be still more animating than the thrilling glances of Madame de Clairville.

"Great news, Fanny!" exclaimed he; "fortune has played a freak in our favour, for which we are bound to worship her."

"What has happened?" enquired Fanny.

"Godfrey Spenser, my third cousin,

has broken his neck in hunting, and I may take possession of his hunters and estate as soon as I please."

Fanny did not appear as much exhilarated by this intelligence as might have been expected: she did not seem to consider an accession of wealth the most certain road to happiness, but received the congratulations, which were offered upon this splendid addition to their income, with astonishing composure.

When Mrs. Mowbray's first feelings of surprise and joy had a little subsided, she enquired what they knew of Godfrey Spenser.

No intercourse had subsisted between them: they only knew that he was a fine young man, not more than twenty-four years of age.

"Poor fellow," exclaimed she; "a dreadful accident indeed!"

"Dreadful," said Mr. Spenser, ringing the bell for his boots.

"Dreadful!" echoed Fanny, calmly finishing her chocolate.

"And do you really flatter yourselves that you feel any regret for the fate of this young man," said Mr. Mowbray, looking up from a letter which he was reading.

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Mowbray, "a *sort* of regret; a *kind* of instinctive pity."

"It is all self-delusion," said Mr. Mowbray. "If a letter were to arrive to-morrow, stating him to be alive and well, we should ascertain the depth and reality of this instinctive pity. Depend upon it, your heart is at this moment overflowing with exultation; therefore do not think it necessary to be pathetic on the occasion, at least, not in my hearing." Mr. Mowbray returned to his letter:—It was from Mr. Wentworth, announcing his intention of coming to town with his family, and requesting Mr. Mowbray to engage a suitable house for them in the neighbourhood of the one he occupied.

"What can have effected this miracle,"

exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray: "Mr. Wentworth in London! I should not have been at all more surprised, if all the old oaks in his park had suddenly transported themselves to Portman-square. What can he mean to do with himself. He can't hunt, or shoot, in Hyde-Park, or Bond-street."

"Business alone induces Mr. Wentworth's journey," replied Mr. Mowbray; "and his stay will be very short; but Edmund has persuaded him to allow his wife and family to remain a month or two, in the hope that the change will be beneficial to Helen.

"How provoking," exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray; "it is bore enough to visit such humdrums in the country: to be haunted by them in London is too detestable."

Regret, however, was vain: in about six weeks the Wentworths arrived in town, and Mrs. Mowbray felt obliged to include them in many of her plans and parties.

In the interim, Mr. Spenser's prophecies respecting Geraldine were rapidly accom-

plishing. She was soon surrounded by admirers. Lord Harrington was an oracle in the world of fashion, and he had decided, that she was a devilish fine girl; and that *he* would be a devilish lucky fellow who won her. All the time he could spare from lounging in Bond-street, and losing his money at Brooke's, was passed at Portman-square, in whispering vows and compliments to Geraldine.

Montague looked as if he thought him a presumptuous coxcomb; but he kept silence. Lord Harrington was not a rival to be dreaded: others appeared; and one or two so formidably eligible, that he trembled. They were *lovers* too; not mere *suitors*: the distinction has already been made, and nothing can be more correct; but suitors and lovers shared the same fate, — they were all dismissed. Montague's hopes revived: he waited impatiently for permission to enter the lists openly; and when at length it was granted, indemnified himself for his fears

and silence, by the most ardent and enthusiastic professions of love. Geraldine listened with delight, and yielded up her heart to those enchanting hopes, and brilliant anticipations, so natural in the spring of life and of love. She thought herself the happiest of human beings: — the present was all joy, the future all promise. No cloud arose to dim the fairy scenes sketched by youth, hope, and fancy; but while love seemed gently leading her through his garden of blooming sweets, to a bower of bliss, she was wandering from the only source of pure and permanent happiness. Her thoughts and affections were devoted to Montague; her time to the world and its pleasures. The rich and varied blessings of her lot were rapturously enjoyed; but the hand which dispensed them, was unacknowledged and forgotten. Her actions, instead of being regulated by the simple and immutable standard of Christianity, were conformed to the fantastic laws of fashion; and she

no longer remembered, that 'the fashion of this world passeth away.'

Temptations multiplied around her, engagement succeeded engagement, with a rapidity which allowed no interval of leisure. Mrs. Mowbray looked over her tablets with exultation. The claims of countesses and viscountesses, stood in delightful array; and it was necessary to calculate and contrive, in order to secure a few hours for the theatre.

A party was formed to see Kean, in Richard the Third: it included the Wentworths, Spensers, and Madame de Clairville. They dined in Portman-square, and proceeded from thence to Drury-lane.

Geraldine, intent only on the performance, was soon absorbed in the business of the stage. She left it to the fashionable veterans of the party, to detect the honourables and right honourables, in the shelter of their private boxes; to curtsey

judiciously, listen bewitchingly, and whisper graciously. 'With eye, and ear, and heart intent,' she contemplated Kean's admirable representation of Richard, withdrawing her eyes from the stage only to talk over, with Montague, the fine points of his acting, and the fine passages of the play.

When the curtain dropped, Madame de Clairville affirmed, that she had been doing *l'impossible*, to like our terrible Shakspeare; but without success. Talma was idolatrously fond of him; but then, certainly, the terrible was in his own *genre*. To see Talma in Œdipe, *Grand Dieu!* it was terrific. He had persuaded her, that if she saw a piece of Shakspeare's well-represented, she must enjoy it; but she could not enjoy it. He might be sublime; so was a burning mountain: but *avec permission*, she would rather be at a safe distance from it. Its sublimity did not compensate for the terror it inspired; nor the few precious minerals it threw up,

for the abundance of stones and rubbish which accompanied them.

Mr. Wentworth listened to this opinion with a mixture of impatience and contempt; bluntly declaring that he did not believe any Frenchman or Frenchwoman upon earth really understood Shakspeare. The Countess politely acknowledged him to be a very difficult author; but, *heureusement*, there had been Frenchmen, as familiar with Shakespeare as with Racine and Corneille: *par exemple*, Voltaire.

The contemptuous expression of Mr. Wentworth's features became stronger. Voltaire understand Shakspeare! He understood him about as well as he did the Bible! The Countess, insisted no longer; she smiled compassionately, took several pinches of snuff, and dexterously changed the subject. She admired the house: it was *superbe*, rather too large, but the *coup d'oeil*, was *charmant!*

Mr. Spenser thought it not so charming as usual; there was a sad dearth of hand-

some women; nothing lovely beyond their own box. He fixed his eyes on Geraldine, to refresh them after their fruitless search. She disputed the point with him, she thought there were many handsome women. One very beautiful nearly opposite. Mr. Spenser looked again; yes, a fine woman, decidedly a very fine woman. There was an air of fashion, too, about her: who could she be? He left the box to ascertain this important point, and in a few minutes they saw him enter the one in which she was sitting. There was a bow, a smile, signs of acquaintanceship, and recognition. He was soon conversing with great animation. Geraldine was startled by a deep sigh from Fanny, and saw that her eyes were directed towards her husband. There was anxiety, almost anguish, in their expression. It seemed however, but the pang of a moment. The next minute she was eulogising Racine and Voltaire with Madame de Clairville.

Mr. Mowbray cavilled with Voltaire, and found fault with Racine. Who could sympathise with his heroes and heroines; they were always on stilts, and in stiff brocade, declaiming about their sorrows for an half an hour together, by the stop-watch. A great deal of fine sentiment, and declamation might be found in his tragedies; but not a grain of nature; none of those masterly touches, those brilliant flashes by which Shakspeare reveals the springs of action, and the secrets and passions of the heart.

The curtain drew up for the afterpiece. It was a pantomime; and Madame de Clairville's expressive shrugs, and exclamations evinced her astonishment at this incongruous melange. She thought, with Sterne, that 'they managed these matters better in France.' Without doubt, the English were an admirable nation!—profound, *philosophique*; but she must take the liberty of questioning their dramatic taste. They where a whole century

behind the French in that particular. Tragedy, and Harlequinade! *Grand Dieu!* it was *barbare!* Most of the party conceded the point: they acknowledged the arrangement to be in bad taste: but Mr. Wentworth contended for its excellence. It was very easy, he said, for those who objected to it to leave the house; and for his part, he thought it as well to laugh after a tragedy as before it. Madame de Clairville had nothing to oppose to such reasoning: she acknowledged it to be a matter of feeling, and had again recourse to her snuff-box.

CHAP. XI.

Week after week passed away, in a constant succession of engagements; and Geraldine might, perhaps, have become weary of the incessant glitter of the scene, had not the devoted tenderness of Montague, given a resistless charm to every hour.

Letters had been addressed to Mr. Beresford, at Florence, and the engagement waited only his approbation, (of which no doubt was entertained,) to be considered absolute.

Never had Geraldine looked more lovely; the exquisite sense of happiness, which gave a nameless charm, a new value to existence, beamed in her eyes, and brightened her smiles.

Montague was constantly at her side, in

public and private. The young men pronounced him to be a lucky fellow; a happy dog: and the young ladies with a secret sigh over the engagement, which frustrated many a flattering hope, declared that they would be a most charming couple; that they were formed precisely for each other.

Edmund Wentworth expressed great indignation at the happiness her looks expressed.

"Miss Beresford," said he, "the old often-quoted Chinese compliment, 'felicity is painted in your countenance,' changes its character in your case, and conveys a keen reproach. You have been amusing yourself with stealing men's hearts, or breaking them; and now, when they are exclaiming, in the most dolorous tones imaginable, 'I prithee, give me back my heart,' you don't even deign them a look of sympathy. Eve could not wear a more radiant smile, when gathering the flowers of Eden."

"The little mischief I have done," said

Geraldine, "will be easily repaired; the wounds are too slight to require any balm."

"Lay not that flattering unction to your soul," returned Edmund; "the day of retribution is at hand, and the meagre forms of Harrington, Ingleby, Pelham, (to say nothing of my own,) will haunt your dreams. There is no resource left for us but the lover's leap: I hope, if my cure is not effected, I shall at least have the good luck to be changed into a swan as Sappho was."

"It would be rather difficult to effect a cure where there is no disease," said Geraldine, laughing.

"I am a most unfortunate being," returned Edmund; "the victim of prejudice; because it has been the custom of lovers, from time immemorial, to express their misery by sighs; I, who say in plain intelligible words, that I am dying for love, am not to be believed; now sighs, after all, must be an equivocal sort of language; for who can tell whether they are breathed for

a maid with black eyes, or a maid with blue ones."

"I begin to suspect," said Miss Cotterel, who was sitting by Geraldine; "that you have got rid of your love, as Mr. Shandy did of his grief, by talking of it."

"You make no allowance, I perceive," replied Edmund, "for the change of manners and customs effected by the silent lapse of time. In Shakspeare's day 'a despairing lover was recognised by his lean cheek, sunk eye, and ungartered hose:'—there was a very slight shade of distinction between his outward appearance, and that of a madman. Now, a modern despairing lover has not this relief. The progress of refinement, unfortunately, renders his task more difficult: like the Spartan boy, he must wear a face of calmness, while his heart is cruelly torn from his bosom."

"I think," said Miss Cotterel, "that despairing lovers, like disconsolate widows, generally solace themselves with a second choice."

Some of the young ladies who were present, contended against the possibility of second attachments. It was high treason to love,—chaste, omnipotent love, to admit the idea. They quoted instances, ancient and modern, from the times of Artemisia, and Agrippina to the present day.

Miss Cotterel thought, from all she had heard and read upon the subject, (for she professed to have no personal experience,) that there must be two sorts of love; — the one, a fine imaginative poetical love, wasting itself in rapture and extasy; the other, a quiet, heartfelt, enduring affection, 'increasing like the shadows of the evening, even till the setting of the sun.'"

The young ladies, who either had lovers, or were wishing for them, would not allow that there was any truth in this distinction. True love comprised rapture, extasy, disinterestedness, and durability. It was 'the gift which God had given to man alone, beneath the heavens.' They slily whispered to Miss Cotterel that her hour

would come. Miss Cotterel did not believe it; she declared the love they talked of had died with St. Preux. The Cupid who fluttered about the world at present, was very different to the lover of Psyche, and much less formidable: instead of having any thing to do with the soul, he was often seen with spectacles on, gravely weighing gold, and inspecting bank-notes. Who could care for Cupid in such a form? Miss Cotterel's dissertation on Cupid was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Mowbray, with a number of concert tickets in her hand; they were for the benefit of a favourite vocal performer, and she was anxious to collect a brilliant party for the evening. Miss Cotterel readily acceded to her request of joining it, and Edmund promised to enlist as many recruits as the time would permit.

On his return home he proposed the concert scheme to his sisters. Since Helen's arrival in London he had endeavoured to relieve her spirits, by directing her atten-

tion to new objects; he wished to excite in her mind a taste for literature and the fine arts; to prove to her that society offered pleasures in which she might participate without danger. He had judiciously abstained from pressing her attendance at public places, and had admired his own forbearance in yielding to what he considered an absurd prejudice: but Miss Wentworth gave him no credit for this forbearance; from her his views, however moderate and reasonable, met with constant opposition. The moment the concert was proposed she opposed the plan, declaring it to be her intention never, voluntarily, to listen to any but sacred music. "Helen must do as she pleases; she is becoming more worldly every day."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Edmund, in a tone of irritation; "I had rather she would become any thing than a devotee."

"You would rather see her the slave of the world, than the servant of God," said

Miss Wentworth, emphatically; "I can only pity and pray for you."

"Yes; you can do more," said her brother, taking her hand affectionately; "without losing sight of heaven, you might condescend to tread lightly and cheerfully your appointed earthly path."

"I shall never consent to a sinful conformity with the world," replied Miss Wentworth, coldly.

"Sinful conformity!" echoed Edmund; "do you call listening to good music a sin?—Why should a Christian be excluded from the enjoyment of the fine arts, and the gratifications of taste?"

"Because," replied Miss Wentworth, "time is short, and the Christian, whose eye is steadily fixed on heaven, is too anxious to reach his resting place, to care about the toys, that may present themselves to his view on his way thither."

"A traveller journeying to a certain spot," rejoined Edmund, "might as well

refuse to contemplate the rich views, and listen to the enchanting melodies which diversify his road."

"Persons begin by indulging themselves in what they choose to call innocent pleasures," said Miss Wentworth, "and continue to pursue them, till their thoughts are entirely absorbed, and they become 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.' Helen has had a volume of Shakspeare, under her pillow, for the last fortnight; and persuades herself, I suppose, that there is no harm in devoting her thoughts to vain imaginations, instead of dedicating them to God."

Tears filled Helen's eyes: she felt herself to be inexcusable; but Edmund exclaimed—"Take courage, my dear little girl: don't look so terribly miserable. St. Chrysostom did much worse than you; for he slept with a volume of Aristophanes under his pillow; yet who has ever ventured to question his piety?"

Miss Wentworth declared, that she knew nothing at all either of St. Chrysostom, Aristophanes, or Shakspeare; but she knew her duty, and hoped she should have grace to practise it.

"So, you won't go to the concert to oblige me," said Edmund.

"Certainly not," replied Miss Wentworth. "I should think it a criminal waste of time."

"Is it so much more profitable to stay at home, net purses, and yawn?" said Edmund, in a contemptuous tone.

Miss Wentworth returned no answer.

"Oh! the inconsistency of human nature, under every form," exclaimed Edmund; "people who think it a criminal waste of time to attend a concert or a ball, will frequently pass hour after hour in a state of listless inactivity, a sort of creditable idleness, the body and mind equally torpid, flattering themselves that dulness is virtue, and that they are wise and holy;

because their thoughts never excurse, but move in one narrow, gloomy circle."

Miss Wentworth retorted this philippic with considerable asperity. Had she parried it with playful wit, or softened her refusal to accompany him by sweetness of manner, it would have been felt as a harmless 'insect vexation;' but the harshness of her language, and the air of superior sanctity which she assumed, disgusted him.

"If you think it necessary to your own salvation," said he, "to starve your intellect and imagination, you are at liberty to do so; let self-mortification be your principle; you are welcome, if you please, to live upon cabbage-leaves, like the Princess Louise, or to stand upon one leg for a twelve month and a day, like a *Faquir*; but don't insist upon our following your example."

"What is a *Faquir?*" enquired Mrs. Wentworth, roused from her usual state of

placid indifference by this extraordinary feat.

"A gentleman, ma'am," replied Edmund, "who goes to heaven his own way, as we intend to do."

"I know of but one way," said Miss Wentworth.

"I am sorry for it," returned Edmund, "for many of my friends have chosen different ones; however, they will meet at last, it is to be hoped, in one point."

"It is utterly impossible!" said Miss Wentworth, with increasing sternness of manner; "Those who live to the world,"—

"Yes, yes; that is all very true, as you were *going* to observe," said Edmund, impatiently; and snatching up his hat, he hurried down stairs, secretly execrating what he termed methodism.

Miss Wentworth, wrapped in her own lofty and exalted views, forgot to calculate the effect of this ruggedness of manner and temper, upon a gay young man of the

world. Theoretically, she acknowledged it to be a duty to adorn the Christian doctrine in all things; practically, she renounced it. Her mind was, indeed, a consecrated temple, but little of the beauty of holiness was diffused over it.

A thousand conscientious fears and scruples harassed the timid Helen. The riches of the intellectual world, and the regions of taste, had just been unveiled to her; and, like the Peri at the gate of Paradise, "she lingered, and wept disconsolate," unwilling to quit the lovely land of which she had obtained a transient glimpse; but still she felt half-inclined to sacrifice all, and return to the monotonous path, which, if not pleasant, seemed at least secure. She continued to revolve 'sweet and bitter fancies,' till Edmund returned in the evening, when she began to apologise for not accompanying him; but he absolutely refused to listen, and, by the aid of raillery and reason, led her triumphantly away.

CHAP. XII.

The concert was held at the Argyle Rooms, and the centre box engaged for Mrs. Mowbray's party. As they were making their way to it, Geraldine felt the touch of a fan on her shoulder, and, turning round, recognised Harriet Bernard. Geraldine looked with some curiosity on the short square figure, and broad good-humoured face, of the lady, on whose arm she was leaning, and whom she introduced by the name of Abingdon. Her husband had been a flourishing tradesman, who loved to accumulate and live quietly. The extent of his wealth had been unsuspected, till his will was opened, when Mrs. Abingdon found herself mistress of an hundred thousand pounds.

The Bernards, who had forgotten their second cousin, while a resident in a dull, dirty looking house, in Watling-street, found it convenient to remember her when at the head of a handsome establishment in Russell-square. She was suddenly metamorphosed into that good worthy creature, 'My cousin Abingdon.' Letters were dispatched to enquire into the state of her health and spirits, and to invite her to recruit them in Hampshire. She had more taste, however, for the noise of carts and carriages, and the music of the muffin-man's bell, than for the melody of birds and the babbling of brooks, and declined the invitation with many expressions of gratitude. In return, she requested that one, or both, of the young ladies would favour her with their company in the Spring.

Miss Bernard, who piqued herself on the superiority of the family connection, did not avail herself of the invitation; but Harriet, who thought wealth and gaiety

the very best things the world had to give, readily complied.

"My dear creature, I am amazingly glad to see you," said she, passing her arm through that of Geraldine, and joining the party with alacrity; "I have been dying to get to town for the last month; Mrs. Abingdon invited me ages ago, but papa had one of his desperate fits of the gout, which kept us all prisoners. I thought I should have gone wild to be obliged to stay, listening to the tiresome birds, and seeing the disagreeable leaves come out."

"This is a sudden transformation, is it not?" exclaimed Montague: "I have heard you, panegyrising the delights of seclusion, after the manner of Rousseau and Zimmerman, by the hour together."

"Seclusion, in the society of a gouty father, and seclusion in company with a gay young fellow, are distinct things," said Edmund. "There is another instance, Miss Beresford, of the different meanings attached to the same

word. In the first sense, it conveys the idea of dulness, tedium, ennui: in the second, of enjoyment, rapture, and extasy."'

"Hush, Edmund," said Montague, "you are so enamoured with the sound of your own voice, that you will not let us hear Mrs. Salmon's."

"There, Helen," whispered Edmund, "when the rapturous plaudits, which succeeded the song had ceased, do you think it will do you more harm to listen to those sweet sounds than to the nightingale's song?"

"I hope not," returned Helen, in a low tone; "but it excites quite a different emotion in my mind. The music, the lights, the gaiety of the scene, produce very opposite feelings to those inspired by the moon-light evenings, in which I have listened to the nightingale. They led my thoughts from the pleasures of earth to those of heaven.—Now here,"—

"Hush, hush, my dear," exclaimed

Edmund: "you are one of the best little girls in the world; but if you indulge these notions, you will be fit only for

The blameless vestal's lot,
The world forgetting, by the world forgot.—

Now, why should it not be remembered and enjoyed?—look at Miss Beresford; I am sure, she will put you in good humour with it."

Geraldine's countenance at this moment, was expressive of that fulness of enjoyment, which springs from the blended emotions of satisfied affection and gratified taste. She was listening to delicious music in the presence of a beloved object, alternately enjoying the concord of sweet sounds, and catching the beaming glance of fond sympathy. A quiet but exquisite consciousness of happiness, stole over her heart, and the sounds seemed indeed, 'to take the prisoned soul, and lap it in Elysium.'"

Miss Cotterel, who cared very little

about music, amused herself in examining the faces of those around her. Harriet Bernard's incessant exclamations of "exquisite! charming! — really Braham is a divine little fellow!" attracted her notice. She contrasted the restless roving of her eye, in quest of admiration, with the wrapt and fixed attention of Helen, and the 'sober certainty of waking bliss,' expressed in the countenance of Geraldine; and turning to Edmund; —

"I am no physiognomist," said she, "I always laugh at Lavater, for estimating a man's character by the shape of his eyes, nose, and forehead; but what do those faces express?"

"The first, vanity and insipidity; the second, love and joy; the third, sensibility and rapture," replied Edmund.

"Exactly," said Miss Cotterel. "Now, look round, and you will soon discover that not one-third of the young women in the room are listening to, or caring about the music. Those who have admirers

are listening to them; and those who have not are hoping to secure them."

"Silence, my dear," said Lady Cotterel; "you don't mean what you say.—Pope was merciful, compared to you."

"No, ma'am, you are mistaken.—Pope spoke evil of women; I speak truth."

"And evil too, I think, my dear."

"Not at all," said Miss Cotterel. "Love and admiration are nectar and ambrosia to women; and those who do not acknowledge this, feel it."

At the conclusion of the concert, while the party were waiting for their carriages, some observations were made on the vocal performers of the evening.

"I don't think Miss Stephens was in voice to-night," said Lady Cotterel; "I have heard her sing much better."

"You are no judge of these points, ma'am," said Miss Cotterel; "for you have not the least ear for music, nor the smallest knowledge of it."

"I can judge," returned Lady Cotterel, good-humouredly, "of what pleases me."

"I don't imagine," said her daughter, "if you shut your eyes, that you would know Miss Stephens's voice from Mrs. Salmon's; for, as I said before, you have no ear."

The musical young ladies thought it impossible that the voices could be confounded, they were so very dissimilar. A great display of judgment and nice discrimination followed; sweetness, depth, clearness, volume, flexibility, echoed on every side; they ended with a repetition of their opinion, — that it was utterly impossible to confound the voices.

"Very likely," said Miss Cotterel, "it may be impossible to the family of 'Fine Ear,' to which all young ladies now pique themselves on belonging; but my mother does not claim affinity with them; and I rather believe that many others, if they were put to the test, would have some difficulty in establishing their pretensions."

"For my part," said Mrs. Abingdon, "I am free to confess, that I could not tell one from the other for the life of me; I don't think there is a pin to choose between them; they all sing wonderful well."

Miss Cotterel stared at her auxiliary, but returned no answer.

"I don't hear one word in ten that they say," continued Mrs. Abingdon, "it's Greek to me. However, it is all very well, if the young people are but entertained; that is the main point."

Miss Cotterel, after another look of astonishment and contempt, turned abruptly away.

At a little distance, with a party, who, like themselves, were waiting for their carriage, they perceived Mr. Spenser. He was unaccompanied by Fanny, and appeared wholly occupied with a very lovely young woman.

"Do you know any thing of the lady to whom Mr. Spenser is talking?" said Montague to Miss Cotterel.

"I know that she is a modern Calypso," replied Miss Cotterel, laughing. "Woe unto those who get into her enchanted bower."

"But by what name is she known among mortals?" said Montague. "She is the Honourable Mrs. Dareville, a widow, who has thrown off her weeds and her grief with a rapidity considered rather indecorous. I assure you the dowagers shake their heads prophetically on the occasion."

"How long has her husband been dead?" enquired Montague.

"About six months," replied Miss Cotterel; "and you see how few of the trappings of woe she retains."

"The mind and the frame must resemble each other but little," said Montague, looking at her attentively. "Who would imagine that coarseness of feeling and sentiment could be associated with such a form?"

"I cannot unite in the cry raised against

her on this account," said Miss Cotterel: "at any rate she is genuine, — superior to paltry affectation. There are plenty of people left in the world to 'mimic sorrow when the heart's not sad.'"

"Hypocrisy, in this instance," said Montague, "would be decency, if not virtue."

"I think she may be ashamed of herself," said Mrs. Abingdon, secretly exulting in the comfortable propriety of her own deep crapes and broad hems; "even if she did not care for him, a husband is a husband after all."

At this moment, Mr. Spenser came towards them, and Geraldine enquired after Fanny.

"She is not very well," replied he, carelessly; "a little vapoured, I believe: she preferred a *tête-à-tête* with Madame de Clairville to harmony, — celestial harmony."

Montague asked some questions about Mrs. Dareville.

" She is a gem, fit for the crown of an emperor! — a perfect unique!" said Mr. Spenser.

" A unique, Sir! Lord, so much the better!" exclaimed Mrs. Abingdon, arranging her shawl; " It is to be hoped there a'n't many like her! It would not be over-pleasant, I dare say, to her poor husband, if he could look out of his grave, to see her with her hair full of roses, and a parcel of young fellows making love to her, so soon after his death. Now, would you like to be served so yourself, Sir?"

" I hope, Madam," answered Mr. Spenser, laughing heartily at this appeal; " that whenever my turn arrives, I shall prove the most gentle and amiable of ghosts, and rejoice with the utmost benevolence in the felicity of my *ci devant* wife. When we ' shuffle off this mortal coil,' it is to be hoped that we shall shuffle off the selfishness belonging to it."

Mrs. Abingdon made some efforts to understand the latter part of this speech,

but finding them ineffectual, she wished him good night, with a smile, and turning to her young companion, exclaimed, "Come, my dear, I can take care of you; never mind waiting for the gentlemen; I can elbow my way with the best of them." The gentlemen bowed in silent acquiescence, and Miss Harriet was obliged to content hesrelf with the inglorious protection of Mrs. Abingdon's substantial arm.

"Well, Montague, shall I introduce you to that radiant being," said Mr. Spenser, again looking at Mrs. Dareville.

"No, I thank you," replied Montague, calmly; "she may blast me with excess of light!"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Spenser, with an admiring look at Geraldine; "you are safe; you bear about you a charmed heart. Come, you have too much taste to resist. There is nothing equal to Mrs. Dareville's *petits soupers*; and I have a *carte blanche* for my friends."

Montague hesitated; he persuaded himself that it would be right, for his sister's sake, to ascertain whether this Mrs. Dareville were indeed the enchantress she was described to be, and consented to accompany Mr. Spenser, after having conducted Geraldine to Portman-square.

CHAP. XIII.

MONTAGUE was yet a novice in the world, and more especially in the world of fashion. His enthusiastic passion for study had preserved him from the temptations of Oxford; and his enthusiastic love for Geraldine had rendered him indifferent to the temptations of London. Since his engagement with her had been decided, his feelings had changed something of their character; the luxury of certainty had succeeded the anxiety of hope, and a sense of security now mingled with his passion. She was still the 'Peri to his sight;' but secure in the consciousness of being beloved, and in the certainty that she would one day be his, he became gradually less insensible to the general attractions of

London, and the peculiar fascinations of the circle in which Mr. Spenser lived and moved. Upon his introduction to Mrs. Dareville, he felt the reality of Miss Cotterel's description. The dazzling beauty of this lady, and the enchanting grace of her manner, combined to captivate; and Montague acknowledged that they might have proved resistless to a disengaged heart. He had imagined that, with his view of the purity and sacred nature of love and marriage, he should have recoiled from this gay widow, whose life was brilliant, and festive as a gala-day; but her aspect disarmed him. There was no quarrelling with a face and figure, which the loves and graces had delighted to adorn; and however revolting her gaiety might be to his moral taste, when abstractedly considered, it threw a powerful charm over the hours passed in her society.

Mrs. Dareville, though still very young, availed herself of the privileges of widowhood to their full extent; she tasted largely

of the pleasures society had to offer, and courted the intimacy of men of talent and fashion: notoriety was her object — to be admired and talked of; to be the central point of a brilliant circle her highest ambition. The beaten road was not the one she chose to tread; routs and balls were common vulgar sort of things: she gave them now and then to please the world, but her *petits soupers* were given to please herself and her favourites. The gentlemen were greatly in the majority in these parties; two or three ladies, *d'une certaine age*, lent her the sanction of their presence; and she occasionally provided auxiliaries among the handsome and lively of her acquaintance; but, by some happy art, she contrived to be the polar star, to which all eyes were directed.

Montague found in this circle many young men of fine talents and irregular habits, whose conversation, gay and sparkling, exhilarated the spirits and awakened the fancy.

Mr. Spenser was pre-eminent among them; eloquent and gay, his knowledge enriched, his imagination diversified every subject. After two hours of unmingled enjoyment they took leave, and Spenser, taking Montague's arm, exclaimed, as they walked out of the house, —

"Are not these evenings worthy of the gods?"

"Some divinity has inspired *you*, I believe," said Montague; "for you have surpassed yourself. You reminded me of the fairy tale; whenever you unclosed your lips precious stones and flowers poured forth spontaneously."

"The temple of a goddess is the region for inspiration," replied Spenser; "she is resistless!"

"No;" said Montague, "she is admirable, but not resistless; not, at least, to us, who have already chosen our tutelar divinities; we cannot forget either their claims or their prerogatives."

"Prerogatives!" echoed Spenser; "that word, thank Heaven, is unknown in love's delightful language: the allegiance of the heart is spontaneous, and resists the despotism of a formal claim. Depend upon it, the decline and fall of the empire of love is far advanced, when either man or woman urge their prerogatives."

"Whether urged or not, they exist," said Montague; "and none, surely, but disloyal traitors can refuse to acknowledge them."

"It is rather a delicate point," said Spenser, "to settle the boundaries of this same prerogative. Some people have been mistaken enough to believe that it includes absolute power and dominion: now, under the empire of love, or any other empire, I hope to be as free as the air I breathe; life without perfect liberty would be but a galling load to me."

They walked rapidly on. Montague appeared absorbed in thought.

"Here we part," exclaimed Spenser.

"Why, this is not your way home," said Montague.

"I shall not be at home these three hours," returned Spenser; "I am going to meet a club of choice spirits."

"What! at two o'clock in the morning?" exclaimed Montague, in great astonishment.

"Yes; that is our hour for meeting; and we shall part when, like Hamlet's ghost, we snuff the morning air. There are some 'fellows of infinite jest' among us. Speak the word, and I will introduce you; come but once, and you will hate yourself for having passed so many bright hours in sleep. Let dull fools and weary mechanics sleep; we can do better."

"I doubt the truth of your conclusion," said Montague.

"Judge before you decide," replied Spenser.

"Not to night, at any rate; my mind is too cloudy. I should only have glass beads

and trumpery to barter for their gold and gems."

They parted, and Montague walked to Portman-square, musing on the irregular habits of his friend, and the probable wreck of his sister's happiness.

CHAP. XIV.

LETTERS arrived from Florence, confirming the hopes of Montague and Geraldine. Mr. Beresford made no objection to the proposed alliance, but specified a wish that it might be deferred for two or three years.

Montague was very little disposed to submit quietly to the delay. He pronounced it to be an arbitrary, senseless, preposterous arrangement, founded in some inconceivable whim.

Geraldine, smiling at his impetuosity, asked him, if he dreaded its effect upon her heart, or upon his own.

" I dread, I know not what," answered he, impatiently : " all that is possible; and all that is impossible. Oh, my dearest

Geraldine, how differently must our hearts be constituted, if you can talk calmly of a delay, which to me it is torture even to think of."

"Are you angry, Montague?" said she; "because I cannot feel unhappy in your society; because the consciousness of your affection so fills and satisfies my heart, that I have not room in it for any thing but felicity."

The confiding tenderness of her voice and manner, and the unrepressed expression of it that beamed in her countenance, seemed to increase the irritation of Montague. Fixing on her an ardent and impassioned gaze, he abruptly exclaimed, "Good heaven! does Mr. Beresford imagine that I can patiently listen to his absurd project of waiting two or three years? Write, Geraldine, I implore you; unite your efforts with mine, that this eternal interval may be abridged."

"Ought we not rather to express our gratitude for his compliance," said Geral-

dine, "than quarrel with him about the terms of it?"

"I leave it to you, Geraldine, coldly to reason," said Montague; "I can only feel." He again conjured her to write to her father.

"Yes; I will tell him how *ungraciously* you receive his gracious consent," said she, smiling; "but why should you distrust your own eloquence?"

"It is only yours that will be resistless," returned Montague.

"What think you of trusting to mine?" said Mrs. Mowbray, who had been hitherto a silent witness of this scene; "perhaps a request of this nature will come with rather more grace from me than from Geraldine."

"The very thing, my dear mother," exclaimed he; "you are my good genius, my guardian angel! write this moment."

"Oh, I beg leave to choose my own time," said Mrs. Mowbray; "to-day I am not in the vein."

The day arrived when Mrs. Mowbray

was in the vein; and the following letter was sent: —

" To Edward Beresford, Esq.

" What woman, my dear brother, is proof against flattery? Montague fancies that the magic of persuasion hangs upon my words; that it is impossible you should resist their influence; and I am half inclined to believe him. Your last letter has occasioned a vast variety of feeling; gratitude, wonder, regret, are all at work. The consent, Montague is ready to record in letters of gold; but the interval, the cruel interval, he protests against with all the energy and ardour of a lover. Geraldine does not protest; she only blushes, and sighs, and smiles. You, who know the *sweet pliability* of my nature, may easily imagine that I find it impossible to resist the vehement eloquence of Montague, and the silent pleading of Geraldine's looks. Reconsider this decree. You and I have done with love, and we know that three years are not an eternity; but days and

years in love's calendar, have no precise limit; sometimes they contract into moments, and then again expand into ages: 'sober measurement' is out of the question. To Montague, three years appears an indefinite, interminable period; and you are suddenly transformed into one of that race of 'fathers with flinty hearts,' who have persecuted the hapless tribe of lovers from time immemorial.

"Reverse this sentence, I conjure you, or be content to be considered as much a man of Iron, as he of whom Spenser sung. Do you never mean to be tired of Florence, and the vale of Arno? We are very jealous of the fine statues and palaces which seem to rival us in your affections, and cannot cede our claims with a good grace, even to Michael Angelo, and the Venus de Medicis. Indeed, if you linger much longer, I shall begin to suspect that you have found a Venus still more attractive than one of marble.

"Have you no desire to witness the

triumphs of Geraldine?—to trace all the beauties and graces which the last two years have developed. Her resemblance to her mother becomes striking; she is Margaret Campbell, embellished, animated —a little less of the awful sanctity of the saint, and a little more of the fascinations of the woman. I assure you, she has made sad havoc with the hearts of men, and the tempers of women; and it is with the prettiest unconsciousness imaginable. She conquers hearts, as Alexander did kingdoms; simply by appearing: and most magnanimously indifferent she is to these conquests, caring no more for suitors than Penelope did; and as to Montague, it is very possible, if you continue obdurate, that he may adopt the usual expedient of lovers in these cases, and have recourse to a ladder of ropes and a priest.

"I have hitherto, carefully guarded your Hesperian fruit; but even dragons may be charmed to sleep. You had better

bid farewell to Italy, and watch in your turn, if you wish to retain it.

"Adieu; — I have not, like Geraldine, grown handsome since we parted; but I have attained the dignity of a grandmother, and grey hairs and spectacles will follow in due season. Make haste, or the transformation will have taken place ere we meet; however, I venture to promise, that whatever may be my new claims to veneration, I shall be, as much as ever, your affectionate

"G. M."

This letter produced an answer from Mr. Beresford, in which he lamented that peculiar circumstances would detain him in Florence some time longer, and expressed a fear, that it would not be in his power to make any material alteration in the arrangements under consideration. Montague was indignant, — Geraldine uneasy, — and Mrs. Mowbray, bewildered. She declared that there was no rational way of accounting for such whims. He

really deserved the *dramatic* appellation of the Mysterious Father. But there was no appeal; patience was their sole remedy. Montague did not exclaim, 'Preach patience to the winds;' but he sought to relieve his chagrin by mingling in scenes of gaiety, and to lose his keen sense of disappointment in the varied and tumultuous pleasures of the town. He no longer resisted Mr. Spenser's solicitations: instead of reasoning with, he listened to him; glad to take refuge from his own irritation, in the brilliant wit and gay sallies of the circle to which he was introduced.

Common excitement would have had little power over Montague; but unfortunately, so much of the charm of intellect, and magic of wit, blended with the sensual pursuits of these young men, that neither his taste nor love of refinement took the alarm; and his understanding and fancy became auxiliaries in the stimulus thus given to the passions.

CHAP. XV.

Montague's regret at the postponement of the marriage, became every day less keen; and though he still spoke and thought of it as an event upon which his happiness depended, the interval appeared no longer tedious and insupportable. New enjoyments, untried pleasures, presented themselves in gay succession; and excessive dissipation produced its usual effect of weakening and deadening the affections of the heart.

Geraldine, with the quickness of perception, inspired by love, detected, even earlier than Montague himself, this change in his feelings. Her hope and confidence in his character, struggled for some time against conviction; but at length anxiety

began to mingle with her tenderness. 'The little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand,' first appeared like a dim speck in her bright and dazzling atmosphere; but it rapidly extended, and diffused a chilling gloom over the radiant scene. Womanly pride and delicacy prevented her from betraying any consciousness of this change; but it weighed painfully upon her heart. Montague had still full possession of that heart; there he was enshrined and worshipped; there every expression of tenderness was recorded—every look of love registered; and there with eager fondness, she still cherished those marks of devotedness and affection, which, though fluctuating and capricious, were sometimes as ardent as ever.

Geraldine's bloom and gaiety began to yield to the influence of anxiety and dissipation. London had lost its powerful attractions, and she sighed for the quiet and relief of the country; but Mrs. Mowbray still talked of parties and galas; and they

had promised Fanny a visit at Richmond, which was yet unpaid.

One of the many indispensable engagements which had lately occupied Montague's time, prevented his accompanying them in their ride thither; but his tender farewell, and promise of joining them the next day, left Geraldine's heart sufficiently at ease to enjoy the freshness and beauty of the country, and the brilliancy of a fine morning in July. After a residence of five months in London, the sight of verdure and foliage was in itself refreshing; it was luxury to breathe once more the pure fresh air, and watch the light and silvery clouds, as they floated through the glowing sky. In such a temper of mind, a scene far less rich in beauty, would have had a thousand charms for her; but Richmond — resplendent Richmond, the Frescati of England, appeared a perfect paradise.

Mr. Spenser's villa, situated near the foot of the hill, had received every embellishment which exquisite taste could be-

stow; it combined the most enchanting natural beauty, with all the chaste elegance of tasteful cultivation. The grounds, sloping to the margin of the Thames, presented a rich diversity of open lawn and grateful shade; the flowering shrubs, in luxuriant bloom, diffused delicious fragrance; roses blossomed on every bank, and flowers of all hues filled every border. Surely, thought Geraldine, as the carriage approached the house, in such an Elysium, and united to the man she loves, Fanny must be supremely happy; no doubts arise to harass her mind; no humiliating fears of inconstancy to disquiet her heart; her lot is fixed, and to the joy of mutual affection is added the blessedness of security. A tear dimmed her eye as these reflections arose, and she had scarcely time to brush it hastily away before the carriage stopped.

CHAP. XVI.

In a few minutes, Fanny, the happy, envied, Fanny, appeared to welcome them. As she came forward, a glow of pleasure brightened her cheek, and lighted up her eyes; but it quickly faded, and Geraldine was struck with the languid, and almost haggard expression of her countenance: it did not bespeak happiness, nor even peace. Surrounded by all that was attractive or beautiful in nature and art, in this region of loveliness and luxury, she alone seemed to droop and wither. A deep blush suffused her cheek, as she apologised for Mr. Spenser's absence. She told them that he had been unavoidably detained in town, but would meet them at dinner-time.

"In the interim," said she, "I will do

the honours of his library. Does not this room do credit to Mr. Spenser's taste?

Mr. Mowbray, whose eyes had been intently fixed on her face, was not in an admiring mood; and muttered something about the foppery and affectation of classical arrangements, which Fanny affected not to hear.

"It has been considerably enlarged," continued she, "and we flatter ourselves that it is now complete. Look at this bust by Canova: Phidias himself never surpassed it."

The bust and all the treasures the room contained were duly admired by Geraldine; from the choice collection of books, interspersed with valuable cabinets of medals and minerals, to the rare exotics which filled every recess, and the luxuriant prospects bursting upon the eye from every window.

Fanny left Mr. and Mrs. Mowbray in quiet possession of the library, and conducted Geraldine over the house. It was

impossible not to admire where all was admirable. Every refinement upon comfort and convenience that ingenuity could devise, or luxury desire, were here to be found. It was a fairy palace; but where was the gay and lovely being for whom it had been prepared? Her form, indeed, remained; but the spirit of joy seemed extinct: it no longer sparkled in her laughing eyes, or beamed in her ever-ready smiles. She herself was conscious of the change,—conscious, too, that it was observed, and redoubled her efforts to conceal it; but these efforts were unavailing. In one of the rooms, Geraldine was attracted by a striking likeness of Mr Spenser. She paused to admire the spirit of the attitude, and the animation of the countenance.

"What an invaluable portrait," exclaimed she; "I never saw one, at once so faithful and so happy. It is Mr. Spenser himself, just as he appeared the first evening we saw him at Woodlands."

Fanny continued silent with her eyes fixed upon the portrait, and Geraldine saw her lip quiver convulsively. She turned immediately to its companion, a portrait of Fanny, taken a month after her marriage.

"And this, too, is invaluable," said she; "it is as striking and spirited as the other."

"It is no longer a likeness," said Fanny, in a low tone, and turning mournfully away.

Geraldine, to hide her emotion, continued examining the picture attentively. It was a fancy-portrait; she was depicted as the nymph Cheerfulness, in Collins's exquisite ode; and never were face and form better adapted to embody the poet's dream: her elastic tread, her candid, open, unruffled brow, her sparkling eye and playful smile seemed to inspire all around; it was impossible to contemplate it without admiration. Geraldine looked at the original; she saw the same features; but all inspir-

ation had fled; the eye was heavy, the form spiritless, the step languid; she gazed with sorrow but with deeper tenderness. What could have produced this transformation? As she endeavoured to resolve this question, Fanny suddenly led the way to her nursery, and Geraldine's admiration of her lovely child suspended for a time all other reflections.

By dinner-time, Mr. Spenser arrived: he was in the gayest spirits imaginable, and Fanny appeared an altered creature; her eyes beamed with unusual brilliancy, and her spirits had risen to hilarity. Mr. Spenser's presence seemed to dispel gloom, and diffuse enjoyment. With happy versatility he adapted his manners to the various taste of his guests; with Mr. Mowbray his conversation was all sententious satire and strong sense; with Mrs. Mowbray all playfulness and wit, with Geraldine and Fanny, it varied 'from grave to gay, from lively to serene,' alternately exercising the powers of the mind and

bringing into play the affections of the heart. Geraldine again thought it impossible that Fanny could be unhappy: she was bewildered, and knew not what to conclude.

After coffee had been served, Mr. Spenser proposed a row upon the Thames for half an hour. Mr. Mowbray preferred the shelter of the library after sunset; declaring however, that he could have no possible objection to their shivering in a boat, and calling it enjoyment: it might be gratification, though it passed his comprehension. Mrs. Mowbray pronounced it to be a delightful scheme; but saying, that she felt in a dutiful mood, she offered to play at chess with her husband till their return.

The servants were summoned and the boat prepared in a few minutes. The sun was going beautifully down as they left the grounds and they contemplated in silence the gorgeous pageantry of the western sky gradually fading and melting into the soft indistinctness of twilight.

They glided along with rapidity; the perfect and delicious stillness broken only by the dash of the oars, and the sweet notes of the nightingale. Tender thoughts and recollections filled the mind of Geraldine: all above was peace, all around softness and harmony. The moon, cloudless and refulgent, rose in the east; and in the west, 'the star that lovers love,' glittered and trembled. Mr. Spenser was the first who broke the silence; he quoted, in a low voice, some beautiful lines descriptive of evening.

"It is in moments like these," said he, "that we feel the full value of poetic inspiration. What language, but that of poetry, can paint the feelings which make the heart thrill with such exquisite delight."

"And even that," said Geraldine, "rich and varied as it is, sometimes fails. There are feelings too indefinable, too precious for language."

"If life were made up of minutes such

as these," exclaimed Mr. Spenser, "we need not envy angels their bliss." His arm was thrown fondly round his wife, as he said these words; and Geraldine again thought her the happiest of human beings.

"You are cold, I am afraid," said he, drawing Geraldine's shawl closer round her, and fixing his eyes intently on her face: "We will return."

Geraldine was absorbed in admiration of the scene —

> The silver light, with quivering glance,
> Play'd o'er the water's still expanse.
> Wild were the heart whose passions' sway
> Could rage beneath their sober ray.

She felt all its calm, and it diffused over her countenance, a touching and beautiful serenity; her own feelings were all purity and tenderness, and her confidence in those of Montague became stronger.

"Yes," said Mr. Spenser, interpreting the silence which she did not seem inclined to break; "the spotless and pure mind of woman enjoys these scenes with-

out alloy; it is only man, the creature and victim of passion, that can fully enter into the poet's feelings when he exclaims, while beholding a sky glittering like this with a thousand stars —

> Who ever gazed upon them shining,
> And turned to earth without repining;
> Nor wished for wings to flee away,
> And mix with their eternal ray."

"That sentiment must be occasionally felt by every one, I think," said Geraldine; "but it would be indulged only by those who despise the world, or by those who are weary of it."

"In a few words, either by the saint or by the sinner," said Mr. Spenser, "which do you pronounce me to be?"

"You certainly do not rank among the first class," said Geraldine; "and I leave it to yourself, and Fanny, to decide your claim to the second."

"Oh! I am an incompetent witness," exclaimed Fanny; "my testimony is not

receivable: I might be unable to resist the bribe of smiles and honied words."

"Women," said Mr. Spenser, after a short pause, "are lovely, delightful beings, — sweet delicious flowers; too delicate, and tender, to be trusted to the rude care of man." As he handed them from the boat, Geraldine felt her hand ardently pressed in his; but she attributed it to the fervid feeling of the moment, and without either noticing or resenting it, leaned upon his arm as they returned to the house in calm and innocent confidence.

CHAP. XVII.

They found Mr. Mowbray ruminating, and his lady laughing, over the chess-board.

"You are just come in time to witness my defeat," said she, as they entered the room; "but don't imagine that I yield to superior skill: I am only vanquished by superior patience. I cannot fight in Mr. Mowbray's slow, cautious, Fabius-like style. If I conquer, it must be by a *coup de main*.

"Like other persons, who mistake rashness for courage," observed he, "you meet only with defeat and disgrace."

"No; defeat does not always include disgrace," returned Mrs. Mowbray: "it is only cowards who are disgraced. Cour-

age deserves applause, though it may miss the laurel crown."

"Caution is not cowardice, nor desperation courage, my dear," said Mr. Mowbray.

"Ah! that may be all very true," replied Mrs. Mowbray; "but really, since the days of the Patriarchs life has not been long enough for all this caution. The most brilliant career is always the most rapid. Alexander and Cæsar would never have conquered the world, if they had paused and hesitated at every step they took in it."

"They did no great good by conquering it, as far as I recollect," said Mr. Mowbray.

"No good!" echoed Mr. Spenser. "Did they not prove that courage is powerful and resistless as the lightning from heaven; that it lays all prostrate before it? Is not the spirit, which teaches man to say, 'I trample upon impossibilities,' worth having?"

"That spirit is not valuable," said Mr. Mowbray, "which leads to no valuable end: which produces only mischief. I look upon the whole catalogue of conquerors, from the days of Alexander the Great to the present moment, as a race of malignant spirits who, 'dressed in a little brief authority,' choose to deform and desolate the world."

"And I look upon them as a race of demigods," said Mr. Spenser, "surpassing the common sons of men in power, in energy, in all that is admirable; enduring privation, contemning hardship, inspiring patriotism, living only for fame, and dying encircled with glory."

"And after death," said Mr. Mowbray, "their appropriate dwelling-place is the paradise of Odin—the palace of Valhalla, where the souls of the valiant enjoy the daily pleasure of cutting each other to pieces. What other paradise is fit for a conqueror? The peace, purity, and harmony, which characterise every other Ely-

sium of which men have dreamed, would be thrown away upon them."

"Your reasoning and ridicule are vain, Sir," said Mr. Spenser; "you cannot divest the warrior of his peculiar glory. There is a grandeur in his self-devotedness — his contempt of danger and death, which must kindle admiration as long as a spark of heroism is to be found in the human heart."

"Grandeur!" exclaimed Mr. Mowbray; "yes — some minds are likely enough to be dazzled by it. Among the Lilliputians, Gulliver was called the Man-mountain; but those of larger grasp and more extensive views, detect all the littleness of this grandeur and glory: like an armed ghost, it stalks along, majestic and imposing; but, after all, it is but a fleeting shade."

By this sort of reasoning, you may degrade all that men consider valuable into insignificance," said Mr. Spenser. "Crowns and sceptres may be called baubles; kingdoms sordid dust; and man himself, a worm.

But the world must be new-modelled, before such philosophy will be listened to."

"The world is well enough as it is," returned Mr. Mowbray; "but call things by their right names; let them have their appropriate epithets. A pestilence, an earthquake, a whirlwind, are not admirable, but terrible; so is a conqueror. Battles and sieges, neighing steeds and floating standards, make a brilliant figure in history and poetry; but examine them in detail, inspect them closely, and what do they resemble? —a splendid mausoleum, soothing man's vanity, and betraying his weakness and corruption."

"Ah! my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray, shaking her head, "you have not a spark of the hero in your composition. If all the world had resembled you, Homer and Virgil would have had no heroes to celebrate, and Cervantes no knights-errant to laugh at."

"You, who like Cervantes almost as well as Sterne did," said Fanny, "should

recollect, that, had it not been for the heroes and knights-errant you despise, the helmet of Mambrino, and the steed Clavileno, would never have been called into existence."

"I like wit," replied Mr. Mowbray; "but I am not inclined to like the absurdity upon which wit banquets."

"I like them both," said Mrs. Mowbray: "absurdity and folly are almost as entertaining as wit, and not near so rare."

"Folly," said Mr. Mowbray, "would be only ridiculous, if its boundaries could be precisely defined; but they are apt insensibly to enlarge, and people who begin with folly often end with wickedness."

Mr. Spenser was at this moment struck with a beautiful effect of moon-light, which he pointed out to Geraldine and Mrs. Mowbray. They walked towards the window, and the dissertation on the charms and dangers of folly, was exchanged for one on the beauty and witchery of moonlight.

CHAP. XVIII.

The next morning was passed in quiet enjoyment. Fanny continued gay and smiling, as if anxious to efface the impression her first appearance had produced. Still Geraldine fancied she could detect uneasiness lurking beneath her smiles. Amid the beauty and fragrance of the rose, the thorn might be discerned.

Mr. Spenser appeared more fascinating than ever. It was gratifying to witness the fond playful caresses he bestowed upon his child; and, attractive as his general manner was, at home, it assumed a new and peculiar character.

Some delightful hours were passed in wandering through the grounds, loitering in the most enchanting spots to catch the

refreshing breezes from the river, and listening to a new poem read aloud by Mr. Spenser.

Geraldine now and then sighed, and longed for Montague. Every soft feature of the landscape, every touching passage in the poem, excited a degree of tender regret in her mind. Why was he not near her to share that pure and refined enjoyment, to contemplate nature in her full glow of beauty, to hear the sweet and varied lay which charmed her heart and ear? But a few short weeks had elapsed since he murmured even at an hour's separation; and now he could voluntarily resign her society, even in a spot which seemed to her a lover's paradise. This conviction sometimes brought a burning blush into her cheek, and indignation triumphed over love; but it was the fleeting triumph of a moment, and the pensive languor which stole over her features, her eager glance at every form as it approached, and the disappointment perceptible through her magnanimous attempts to appear indifferent, betrayed the state of her feelings.

Edmund Wentworth and his brother, who had been invited to meet the party with Montague, arrived about an hour before dinner; and hearing, from the servants, that the family were sauntering about the grounds, went thither to join them. They had all, however, returned to the house, except Geraldine, who, restless and uneasy, continued to wander languidly through the shrubberies. She caught a glimpse of the young men at some distance; and, perceiving that Montague did not accompany them, turned into a narrow path, parallel to the one they were pursuing, to avoid meeting them, and discovering the mortification which his absence excited. She walked slowly on, till her attention was arrested by hearing one of them pronounce the name of Montague. Involuntarily and eagerly she listened.

"Where did you leave the gay and gallant Montague?" inquired Edmund.

"As usual, at Mrs. Dareville's feet,"

replied Henry. "There he sits, giving and taking lessons of love."

Geraldine, trembling from head to foot, leaned for support against a tree.

"I believe it is mere badinage," said Edmund; "for he writes soft sonnets, and 'lady-like rhymes,' to half a dozen nymphs, as well as to Mrs. Dareville. I suppose 'his heart of hearts' is still Geraldine's."

"If it be not," said Henry, indignantly, "he is a scoundrel; for she doats upon him."

"Yes," replied Edmund, "her heart is irrecoverably gone; every look and gesture proclaim it. I watched her the other day, when he excused himself from attending her to a concert, upon some frivolous pretext. She was drawing; and after he had left the room, she threw down her pencil, and her eyes filled with tears: pretty creature! I longed to kiss them away."

Geraldine could listen no longer; hurrying by the shortest path to the house, she took refuge in her dressing-room, and locking the door, her conflicting emotions

found relief in a violent flood of tears. To be thus an object of observation, of pity — to excite sympathy as a love-sick neglected girl — what degradation! She felt angry with herself, with Edmund, with all the world, but chiefly with Montague. "Capricious, cruel Montague!" exclaimed she, "to what have you exposed me: it is true, my heart is irrecoverably yours; but my feelings I can and will conceal." Wounded dignity and delicacy combined to animate her. She dried her tears, rapidly arranged her dress, and with sparkling eyes and cheeks glowing with indignation, joined the party in the library.

"The air of Richmond, has already restored Geraldine's roses," said Mrs. Mowbray to Edmund, as she entered the room; "I never saw her look better."

It is a pity thought Edmund, that Montague is not here to admire them. He advanced to meet her, and there was a softness in his voice, an involuntary sort of pitying tenderness in his tone and manner,

which roused her to exertion. She talked with enthusiasm of Richmond and its beauties; of the delightful morning they had passed; of the new poem; and the exquisite pleasure with which she had listened to it. Her eloquence charmed, but did not deceive Edmund; there was the animation of excitement; the flutter of exertion in her manner; but none of the repose that bespeaks happiness. He met her, however, on her own ground; talked gaily like herself, of summer-skies and blooming flowers; of poets and poetry; and led her into the dining-room, claiming the privilege of a seat by her side.

CHAP. XIX.

Their conversation was carried on with the same spirit; the last course was served, and Edmund had just asked her to take wine, when Montague was announced: she bowed with tolerable steadiness; but her hand shook so violently that she could not venture to carry the glass to her lips. Montague apologised carelessly to Mr. Spenser and Fanny, for his want of punctuality, and then looked towards Geraldine; but her face was averted. She had renewed the conversation with Edmund, and had not a glance to spare. A little mortified, he seated himself at the bottom of the table, near Mr. Spenser, who, fixing his admiring eyes on Geraldine, whispered,

"What a lovely being she is. Edmund has inspired her, and when she is animated, her beauty is transcendent."

Provoked by this becoming animation, and by the apparent ease and gaiety of her manner, Montague continued silent for some time; and then addressing his sister,—"Fanny," said he, "prepare one of your prettiest curtseys; for I have welcome news for you."

"A delightful opening," replied Fanny; "pray go on."

"Lord William Glenmore, is in town, and means to pay his respects to you to-morrow."

"I suppose," said Edmund, gravely, "he wishes to avail himself of your acknowledged taste; for he has an important point to determine: he has decided upon marrying; but he hesitates between a very pretty girl, the daughter of a country curate, and the honourable Mrs. Dareville. He declares that both ladies have paid their addresses to him for some time." A

general laugh succeeded this speech, Geraldine involuntarily looked at Montague, and perceived a glow of mingled confusion and anger in his countenance.

"Glenmore likes the fashion amazingly," continued Edmund: "it spares him all the fatigue of wooing. The task of tender assiduity devolves in this case upon the ladies. I give my vote and interest to the curate's daughter; if you are selected as umpire Mrs. Spenser, how shall you decide?"

"It would be charity, I think," replied she, "to patronise your favourite; Mrs. Dareville could only gain the title of Viscountess; but the rapture of an escape from darning stockings and copying sermons, must be incalculable."

"Glenmore was too lazy," said Edmund, "to give me a detail of the manœuvres of the rival fair ones; but, from what I could understand, there was most skill apparent in Mrs. Dareville, and most originality in her competitor."

"Mrs. Dareville appeared so completely to revel in the joys and independence of widowhood," said Mrs. Mowbray, "and to think it so obliging of Colonel Dareville to die, that I was not prepared for a second choice."

"Oh! she is a most consistent practical Epicurean," returned Edmund, "and calculates that twenty thousand a-year will procure, at least, four times as many pleasures as five thousand."

The natural impetuosity of Montague was no longer to be restrained: he had listened with absolute perturbation to Edmund's sarcastic pleasantry; and, interrupting it, observed, in an indignant tone, that "when Mrs. Dareville did condescend to lay snares for a heart, it would not be for that of Lord William Glenmore."

"Very possibly," replied Edmund, coolly; "she may content herself with laying snares for his coronet."

"Preposterous!" exclaimed Montague, with increasing indignation; "the glorious

sun would as soon stoop to borrow from the glow-worm his modicum of light."

"Far be it from me," returned Edmund, "to speak irreverently of the matchless Mrs. Dareville; on the contrary, this conquest is an incontestible proof of the universality of her talents."

"An achievement worthy of them, indeed," said Montague, contemptuously; "to conquer one, whom I have heard you designate again and again, as *un homme né que pour la digestion.*"

"The fair lady is perfectly aware of this little peculiarity," said Edmund, "and adapts herself to it with the happiest condescension. I assure you, I have heard the intellectual, ethereal Mrs. Dareville discourse eloquently with Lord William upon that most inestimable of birds the '*Perdrix rouge*, and that nectar of *les Gourmands*, the exquisite *purée de Becasse.* She is now at Belfont, expecting his lordship, and beguiling the tedious interval in writing billets, sentimental and encouraging to half a

dozen other lovers, whom she allows to sigh in her train. Poor devils! we shall soon hear them saying—

> She smil'd, and I could not but love,
> She is faithless, and I am undone."

Montague became more angry and less guarded in his defence of Mrs. Dareville; and Geraldine suddenly felt the most polite eagerness to distribute the fruit and ices which stood near. Her varying colour fixed Mr. Spenser's attention; and he contrived, by complaining of insufferable heat, and ordering the windows to be thrown open, to change the subject of conversation from the caprices of Mrs. Dareville, to the caprices of the English climate.

"Three days ago," exclaimed he, "we were hovering over the fire: what consistency can be expected from man or woman, in such a climate; is it wonderful, if they are every thing by turns, and nothing long?"

"It would be idle to wonder at any thing," said Mr. Mowbray, "or I might be disposed to wonder at your humility.

Till this moment, I thought you had very sublime notions of the dignity of man, as an intellectual creature; but I find you are content to consider him a sort of machine,—a kind of animated thermometer, the sport and play-thing of the atmosphere."

"I cannot pique myself upon the originality of my observation," replied Mr. Spenser; "for Montesquieu and Milton contended for the influence of climate and season long ago."

"Nothing can be more absurd," exclaimed Mr. Mowbray, "than to talk of the influence of climate, as it respects civilised man. It vanishes where the arts and refinement have made the smallest progress."

"I cannot agree with you," replied Mr. Spenser. "The arts have no where been developed in such full perfection, as in those delicious regions, where nature is all brightness, beauty, and fragrance. Is not the matchless perfection attained in poetry, painting, and sculpture, by the sons of

these happy climates still the theme of wonder and admiration?"

"This perfection must be traced to other causes," observed Montague; "or why does it not still exist? Why is Athens at this moment a heap of ruins? How is it that, under the same bright sky, no Homer, Apelles, nor Phidias, can now be found?"

"The hypothesis that refers excellence of any sort merely to the influence of climate," said Mr. Mowbray, "is a baby structure which may be destroyed by a breath."

"Perhaps we should come rather nearer the mark, by referring it to political institutions," said Montague. "Contemplate Athens and Sparta in the days of their glory; they existed in the same century, under the same climate; and yet could any contrast be more powerful than that which they presented: the one distinguished by majestic simplicity, the other by splendid refinement. To what can this be attributed,

but to the different genius of their legislators and government."

"Unquestionably," replied Mr. Spenser. "Political institutions do much to stimulate and unfold the powers and energies of man."

"Much!" interrupted Montague: "they do every thing. The prosperity and intellectual improvement of every people under heaven have advanced in proportion to the vigour and wisdom of their government, and the encouragement it has afforded to science and the arts. What has climate to do with it? To refer once more to Greece, how justly and beautifully has the poet described the unfading loveliness of nature amidst the decay of art:

Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild;
Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields;
Thine olive ripe, as when Minerva smil'd;
And still his honied wealth Hymettus yields.
There, the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,
The free-born wanderer of thy mountain air.
Apollo still thy long, long, summer gilds;
Still in his beam, Mendeli's marbles glare;
Art — glory — freedom fails; but nature still is fair."

"Without having recourse to the rhapsodies of a poet," said Mr, Mowbray, "it is sufficient to appeal to facts. What was England under the dominion of the Druids? What did not the wise policy of Peter the Great effect for Russia, in defiance of snow and barbarism? It requires neither poetry nor eloquence to prove that government is all in all."

"Yes, yes, government does much; but climate is not without its effect," persisted Mr. Spenser; "and unless you espouse the doctrine of innate ideas, you must confess the influence of surrounding objects upon the mind; and that a region where every thing is gay, warm, and glowing, and where all the ideas are received through the medium of delighted senses, must be inspiring. Do you imagine that Anacreon or Sappho would have sung as they did, if they had been born in the frigid north."

"Surely, Spenser," said Montague, "you do not mean to assert, that the god-

like art of poetry depends on the accident of climate."

"Not altogether," returned Mr. Spenser; "but I certainly mean to assert, that there are climates peculiarly calculated to foster and develope poetical genius. The vales of Arcadia and Italy, where the mind is perpetually filled with beautiful imagery, are more favourable to the growth of poetry, than the snows of Norway and the deserts of Siberia."

"Tell me," said Montague, "where is the nation, however remote, in which vestiges of poetry may not be found. It has flourished in the magnificent wilds of America, and in the perfumed vales of Asia, amidst the rocks of Scandinavia, in the remote island of Iceland, in the bleak mountains of Scotland, in the burning plains of Egypt. It is the language of passion, of emotion, of elevated feeling; in short it is the language of inspiration; 'it is the divinity that stirs within us.'"

"Neither divinity nor dæmon are concerned in the business," said Edmund. "Poetry is not the extemporaneous effusion of the moment,—the ebullition of excited feeling; it is always the work of a mind in repose. The bard whose song stimulated a host to fury, composed it at leisure; and like a magician, could calmly direct and contemplate the storm raised by his spells."

"It is true," returned Montague, "the song might be composed at leisure; but it was not less the production of fervid feeling, of high-wrought imagination, of kindling sensibility. These are the genuine sources of poetry, and they are to be found in every part of the known world."

It was remarked, that poetry differed materially from other arts; that like Minerva, it had started at once into life and perfection; and that during the long series of ages that had succeeded Homer, he still remained unrivalled.

This introduced a discussion upon the

origin of poetry, and various opinions were offered on the subject.

The ladies ascribed it to love; the gentlemen, to ambition. Montague thought these opinions just, only to a certain point. Love, like all other powerful emotions, had its share in exalting the imagination: it was indeed, 'the refiner of invention;' but he questioned whether love, properly so called, could be found in that stage of society to which the origin of poetry must be referred. Neither the bards of Mona, nor the priests of Odin, were inspired by love. The war and death-songs of the American chiefs, were certainly poetical; but they had nothing to do with love: and yet, these were among the first efforts of poetry in different countries. Love had a very small share in the immortal strains of Homer. Mr. Mowbray observed, that whether love had any thing to do with the *origin* of poetry might be doubted; but that he certainly was a personage of vast importance with 'those finical fine gentle-

men, who now frequented 'the lower slopes of Parnassus.'

The young men, with one accord, declared, that love and beauty were 'the dearest themes, that ever warmed a minstrel's dreams;' and the ladies, with very becoming blushes, thought it time to retire to the drawing-room.

CHAP. XX.

The coldness and distance of Geraldine's manner during the evening, appeared rather to excite irritation than regret, in the mind of Montague. He had been so accustomed to her tones of tenderness, and smiles of welcome, that he almost persuaded himself he had a prescriptive right to them; and felt disposed to resent their absence as an injury. After a few faint efforts to engage her in conversation, he abruptly left the room.

Geraldine watched anxiously for his return; her heart beat quickly whenever the sound of an opening door was heard: but she looked and listened in vain, and after lingering in the drawing-room till expiring lights and drowsy tones made her

feel ashamed to remain longer; she withdrew reluctantly to her chamber, and felt, or fancied herself, completely wretched.

To those whom experience has familiarised with the woes and wants of life, these sorrows of the heart usually appear fantastic and absurd; nor would they waste a moment's sympathy, on what they esteem the idle fancies of the young, blooming, and affluent: but the heart perhaps never feels an acuter pang, than at the moment, when its first vivid hopes are crushed; when its faith in the excellence of the being whom it has cherished as an idol begins to waver, and it timidly and reluctantly admits the conviction, that 'the brightest vision it has indulged is but a vision.' Geraldine's feelings were of a complex nature, they were a compound of keen irritation, warm affection, and awakened jealousy. At one moment she resolved upon dismissing Montague with all the dignity of an heroine; at another, upon rekindling his affection by an eloquent

appeal to his heart, by revealing all the tender softness of her own. After some hours of fruitless meditation she fell asleep while debating the point; dreamed of Montague and Mrs. Dareville; of churches, brides, and bridegrooms; found herself, she knew not how, by the side of an altar playing the part of bride's-maid to Mrs. Dareville; the figure of Montague, a moment after, suddenly changed into that of Lord William Glenmore; but Geraldine gained nothing by the metamorphosis, for she herself was as suddenly transformed into the bride. She awoke with a start, congratulated herself upon not being a viscountess, found it late, and descended to breakfast, with the revived hope, inspired by recruited spirits, and a bright summer morning. She had not quite determined whether to be kind or cruel; but it was not necessary to decide immediately, for amidst the group assembled, Montague was not to be seen. It was found, upon enquiry, that he had gone out early, on

horseback without leaving any intimation of the time of his return. Geraldine felt as if the short silence which succeeded this information would never be broken. The colour was rising to her temples, and her agitation was becoming every moment more painful and obvious; when happily Mr. Spenser let fall a cup of chocolate, and by scalding his fingers, and breaking the cup, fixed all attention and sympathy upon himself, and his Dresden China. From specifics for burns, the conversation diverged to porcelain and its varieties; and by the time they had travelled from Worcester to Dresden, and from Dresden to Berlin, Geraldine had recovered her self-command. She listened with apparent interest to the various plans suggested for lounging away the morning. The favourite scheme appeared to be a visit to Oatlands; and Mrs. Mowbray proposed calling at Belfont in their way, and prevailing on Mrs. Dareville to join the party. The gentlemen seconded the pro-

posal; and horses, barouches, and curricles, were put into immediate requisition. The name of Dareville, while it revived Geraldine's blushes lent her the temporary support of indignant feeling; she sprang lightly into Edmund's curricle; and during the ride, talked, laughed, and admired, the beauties of nature indefatigably.

CHAP. XXI.

UPON arriving at Belfont, they were conducted through a suite of apartments into a boudoir, which by the beauty of its situation, and the elegance and refined voluptuousness of its arrangements, seemed to realise the enchanting description of the Castle of Indolence, —

> Was nought around, but images of rest,
> Sleep-soothing groves and quiet lawns between.

Embowering trees created the same kind of chequered day and night; here were the same luxurious couches; and delicious perfumes breathed from a thousand flowers; the same 'sound of lowing herds, and lulling murmurs.' But if Mrs. Dareville had profited by the poet's beautiful descriptions,

she certainly had not profited by his moral warning; for amidst 'flaunting woodbines, and clustering roses,' she did not fear to 'trust her soft minutes with betraying man.' She was seated on a sofa, arranging an elegant bouquet, with Montague by her side: they were so deeply engaged in conversation, that they did not hear the sound of the opening door, and the party had a complete view of them before they were aware of its approach. On the lady's countenance there was an expression of arch and playful mockery. Montague's betrayed unrepressed and indignant astonishment. He started on hearing the names announced, and the laugh of confusion with which he greeted them, was exchanged for a glance of indescribable fierceness at Edmund, to whose agency he attributed the visit. Mrs. Dareville received them with the most graceful and polished courtesy; neither blush nor embarrassment were visible. With the happiest ease she adverted to the pleasures of the town, and

contrasted them with those of the country; passed from the Queen's last drawing-room, and the Duchess of —— s diamonds, to roses and dew-drops; and from the vale of Esher, to those of Tempe and Cashmire;— *apropos*, to Cashmire —, she claimed their admiration of a shawl, the most splendid of all splendid things, which looked, she said, "as if it had never been profaned by mortal touch, but woven by the hand of a fairy, in fairy land." Mrs. Mowbray pronounced it to be "too beautiful to be wasted on English eyes; it could only be duly appreciated by the nice judging taste of Parisian beaux and belles. The power of a Cashmire could be felt and understood only at Paris. She had known hearts which had resisted all the artillery of bright eyes, fall victims to a Cashmire; and a shawl '*peau de lapin*,' had been found as successful a cure for love, as the lover's leap." A discussion upon the different texture of English and French hearts succeeded. Mrs. Mowbray declared that it was impossible to do justice to so de-

licate a subject in the few minutes they had to spare; and looking archly round the room, and then at Montague, and Mrs. Dareville, observed, that she had no hope of prevailing on her to leave her bower of bliss, and accompany them to Oatlands; but that they must, however reluctantly, take courage, and leave it themselves.

Mrs. Dareville immediately rang for a veil, protesting that it would be high treason to good taste, to decline their invitation, only hoping, that they did not mean to dine *al fresco* as she had a dinner engagement at home, at six o'clock. Edmund whispered to Geraldine, that the '*Perdrix rouge*' would be of the party; but she could no longer talk or smile. In vain she struggled to appear indifferent; the rapid changes of her complexion, and the tremor of her whole frame, betrayed uncontrollable emotion, and the sound of the carriage-wheels, was as welcome as a reprieve to a trembling criminal. The remainder of the drive was passed by Geraldine, in a silence which

Edmund charitably forbore to interrupt. On arriving at Oatlands, Montague made no attempt to join her; and though he refrained from paying any personal attention to Mrs. Dareville, he watched her looks, and listened to her words with involuntary and eager interest. Silent, mortified, and spiritless, Geraldine felt completely distanced by the powerful attractions of this lady, who, whether gay or grave, contrived to rivet attention and secure admiration. Mr. Spenser had offered her his arm on entering the park, and she felt oppressed rather than soothed, by the tenderness of his words and manner. Attributing his attention only to the pity which the open neglect of Montague excited, it increased the sense of degradation under which she was suffering; and she with difficulty refrained from bursting into tears. Her emotion appeared to quicken Mr. Spenser's sympathy. He muttered 'curses, not loud, but deep,' against Montague; and his whispers became so unequivocally fond,

that Geraldine began to be startled and disquieted. "Mr. Spenser," said she, with as much dignity and steadiness as she could assume, "I cannot doubt the kindness of your motives; but if you really understand my present feelings, will it not be more consistent with the delicacy of friendship to let them pass unnoticed?"

"Forgive me, Geraldine," returned he, in a hurried tone, "forgive me, if my expressions are too fervent, — if, when I see you suffer, I forget the laws which custom and the world have imposed. I, at least, am not the man to witness such feelings with indifference."

Geraldine said no more, but mingling with the rest of the party, endeavoured to fix her attention upon the passing scene. The effort was unsuccessful. Nature, however lovely, has little power over a perturbed and pre-occupied mind: like a ruffled stream, the images it reflects are all gloom and indistinctness. She returned with a very confused impression of the

beauties of Oatlands and its costly grotto, but with the most painful consciousness, and the clearest recollection of the graces and fascinations of Mrs. Dareville.

CHAP. XXII.

THIS day of suffering had one beneficial result. Geraldine no longer hesitated as to the course she should pursue.

To release Montague from his engagement, was a sacrifice which her own dignity and delicacy required. To deliberate would now be meanness; but to decide was misery. She passed a sleepless night, and rose early to accomplish the important letter. It was no easy task; she wished to express her determination in calm and decisive language; but her heart was eloquent, her feelings powerful, and her expressions kindled into warmth and energy. There was an air of pique throughout the letter, which displeased her. Another was written without success; till, wearied with fruit-

less efforts, she sought to relieve her aching head and oppressed spirits by a stroll through the grounds. She wandered slowly along the shrubbery to a pavilion at some distance from the house, and entered, heedless of the enchanting views it commanded, and of the melody and perfume borne on every breeze. Full of sad thoughts, she threw herself listlessly on a seat, and remained absorbed in painful meditation. From this attitude she was aroused by the approach of footsteps, and in a moment Mr. Spenser was at her side. On observing the grief and agitation expressed in her eloquent countenance, he vehemently exclaimed,—

"This is too much; I can bear it no longer: dearest, most beloved Geraldine, would to heaven, that I were insensible, like Montague, or that like him I had the right and power to soothe your sorrows! He knows not the value of the gem he loses. Oh! that I could wear it at my heart for ever!" He seized her hand and

passionately kissing it, continued to pour forth his tale of lawless love.

Trembling, astonished, and indignant, Geraldine in vain endeavoured to release her hand from his ardent grasp. She rose, but a faint sickness and universal tremor obliged her again to sit down.

" Hear me," said Mr. Spenser, in a tone of increasing fervor ; " I see you hate and abhor me ; but you shall hear me ; you shall listen to me for the last time."

Geraldine again struggled to rise; shocked and humiliated, her pale, agitated countenance, expressed the conflict she endured. " I will not listen a moment, Sir ; I will not remain another instant," said she, again striving to withdraw her hand. " I intreat, — I insist —" she stopped abruptly; for, leaning against the door, pale as marble, with despair painted in her face, stood Fanny.

Mr. Spenser relinquished Geraldine's hand, and, without speaking a word, hastily

quitted the pavilion, and was out of sight in a moment.

The silence which succeeded this scene was at length interrupted by Fanny.

"Geraldine," said she, endeavouring to smile, and making a strong effort to recover composure; "you need not look so like a culprit; you are only guilty of being beautiful, and if you could transform yourself into an angel of darkness, instead of an angel of light, it would do me no good: there would still be angels and beauties in the world, and Mr. Spenser would find them out, in defiance of labyrinth and dragon. I had some hope, indeed," continued she, her voice becoming hoarse and broken by emotion, "that he would have respected his own guest, the affianced wife of Montague; but is there a tie upon earth, however sacred, that he would not violate?"

Geraldine, losing for a time the sense of her own grief in unaffected pity for Fanny, endeavoured to soothe her by assurances

of affection and sympathy; but Fanny hastily exclaimed —

"Do not waste your pity upon me, Geraldine; I am not made to be condoled with and pitied. I have thrown away my chance of happiness. I," said she, with a bitter smile, "who profess to live only for enjoyment, am wretched; for I love Spenser; in spite of all I see, and hear, and feel, I love him. I can laugh and flirt with young men and old, but I care for none of them. My whole heart is my husband's, and it will break before it is detached from him; but the world shall never know me as a fond, faithful, pining, neglected wife. I will keep up the farce; I will never live to endure its pity." She paused for a moment, and then continued —

"I married in spite of warning, because I loved, and was loved. Yes, I *was* loved," she repeated, with a contemptuous smile; "for six months I was the favourite, the pet of his seraglio, — nothing better; and he still heaps gifts and baubles upon me, as if

splendid toys could recompense me for the loss of his heart."

Geraldine, by way of suggesting comfort, spoke of Mr. Spenser's attractive qualities, and of the hope of future reformation; but Fanny shook her head.

"No, no," said she; "nothing less than a miracle could accomplish that work, and the age of miracles is past, if it ever existed. The reformation of a libertine is one of those dreams in which young ladies like to indulge: they marry, and find it but a dream." After a minute's silence,—"I hate advice," said she; "I never take, and never offer it; but for your sake, I will for once depart from this rule. Let neither love, nor hope, nor faith, nor promises, induce you to marry a libertine; be content to escape with half a heart; to be an old maid or a nun; to be poor; to be solitary; to be any thing rather than marry a libertine, and that libertine the man you love."

Geraldine, powerfully struck by the energy of her manner, and recalled by this

warning to the contemplation of her own peculiar situation, was about to confide to her the projected dismissal of Montague, when Fanny abruptly exclaimed—

"Come, I have given you good advice, oblige me in your turn; and, for my sake, play the hypocrite, and, meet this gallant gay Lothario of ours at breakfast, with a smiling face, as if nothing had happened. It will cost me but little effort; for I walk the world in masquerade: I scatter smiles and roses round me, and kindly keep sighs and thorns to myself. But roses and smiles will have an end some day, Geraldine; so follow my example, and, in the first place, come into my dressing-room and put on a little rouge; for you look as if you had been repulsing a spectre instead of a lover."

Geraldine promised to be composed, but resisted the rouge.

"That is nonsense, my dear; a mere English prejudice," said Fanny. "Is it not a virtue to wear rouge, if it will spare a fellow-creature the heart-ache? If I had

appeared with my own natural faded cheeks for the last three or four days, my mother would have fretted over the wreck of my beauty; my father over the wreck of my happiness. Now, by this pious fraud, (ah! you shake your head, but there are such things,) they will leave me to-day in the full persuasion, that I am as healthy and light-hearted as Hebe herself: would it not be cruel to wake them from a pleasant dream? No, let them dream on; it will last but a little longer."

"My dear Fanny," said Geraldine, "rouge would do little for me; it could not give me your astonishing self-possession. I should say or do some foolish thing. Let me breakfast quietly in my chamber; my head-ache will be a sufficient excuse." This plan was resolved upon, and Geraldine was left alone to muse over the strange events of the morning.

CHAP. XXIII.

The fate and warning of Fanny pressed heavily on Geraldine's spirits, at once adding strength to the resolution she had formed, and deepening the sadness and despondency of her feelings; for, from whom could she hope either counsel or sympathy. Mrs. Mowbray would treat the affair with light and playful raillery; Mr. Mowbray, with cold and pointed sarcasm. She thought of past years; of her father, too distant to be her refuge; of her mother, over whom the grave had so early closed. She reverted with feelings of poignant anguish to the irreparable loss she had thus sustained: *at this moment how inestimable would have been her judgment, how precious her affection.* Self-upbraidings mingled with these sorrowful

regrets. The lustre and brightness with which love had invested every object, was fast fading, and they appeared in their true point of view. Dissipation was no longer pleasure; earth no longer seemed heaven. She recalled the precepts and example of her mother; the firmness of her religious principles; her intellectual pre-eminence; her life of active usefulness, of unwearied benevolence. She reviewed her own, and wept at the contrast. It was as the idle flutter of an insect's wing, compared with the soaring of an angel. Awakened from her dream of love and joy, the world was disenchanted, and the frivolity of a life of fashion unveiled. Sad and dispirited, she looked back with regret, and forward with dismay; but not, like Fanny, with despair. The principles early implanted in her mind, though checked, were not destroyed; and while her heart writhed under the blow she was sustaining, she felt that love and self-enjoyment were not the only purposes for which life was granted. In common with

all youthful sufferers, she believed that happiness was for ever lost; that life had no charms left; its freshness, glow, and beauty had faded into gloom; but, though it could not be enjoyed, it was still to be endured and improved.

Geraldine remained engaged in mournful retrospection, till the carriage was announced; then hurrying down, she found Fanny dressed in smiles, exchanging a gay farewell with Mrs. Mowbray. An expressive look and affectionate pressure of the hand was all Geraldine could venture upon. She saw nothing of Mr. Spenser; and as the carriage drove rapidly through his beautiful grounds, she contrasted her present feelings for Fanny, with those inspired by the first view of the lovely spot in which she resided. The sun was as bright, the river still glittered and sparkled in its beam; the flowers were as fragrant, nature as luxuriant and prodigal of sweets; but amidst all that could charm the senses and gratify the taste; surrounded by the lux-

uries of wealth, and fascinations of genius, Fanny could be thought of only as a victim, or a warning. Her blighted hopes and uncontrollable affection excited the most powerful sympathy in the heart of Geraldine. Richly gifted with beauty and talent, her life was wearing away in secret misery. The wilfulness which had always characterised Fanny, still appeared in the private indulgence and resolute concealment of her grief, and in her utter contempt and rejection of every source of happiness which remained. Had her mind been under the powerful control of christian principle, it would have enabled her to suffer with comparative meekness, and perhaps, in some degree, to have counteracted the licentious habits of her husband: referring the peculiar trials and blessings of her lot equally to the bounteous goodness or wise permission of her Heavenly Father; her character would have been purified and exalted by the discipline she was enduring.

That utter desolation of heart, that pro-

found and cureless misery which renders the world a desert, and life a galling load, is unknown to the real Christian; amidst the clouds and storms of life, the promises of God appear like his bow in the heavens, bright and radiant, whispering peace and inspiring hope.

A conviction of this truth was mingling in Geraldine's mind, with sympathy for Fanny, and her own sense of suffering; but love, and the world, had of late so exclusively occupied her heart, that these thoughts occurred with something of the confusion and indistinctness of a long-forgotten dream. She had been little in the exercise of religious hope or fear, and the holy light which could alone guide her footsteps in the way of peace, shone not in full effulgence, but appeared like a distant star, faintly beaming through clouds and mist. Absorbed in reflection, she sat unconsciously silent, till roused by Mrs. Mowbray's lamentations on the misery of being shut up in a carriage with a philosopher

and a love-lorn maiden: the one caring for nothing but a theorem—the other, for nothing but a lover. Geraldine pleaded her head-ache.

"My dear," said Mrs. Mowbray, "I have a great mind to answer you as Johnson did Sir William Scott, on a similar occasion,—'I had no head-ache at your age.' What business have you either with the head-ache, or heart-ache: but Mr. Mowbray has not even this excuse: he is neither sick, nor sorry, nor in love, and yet he is as silent as a disciple in the school of Pythagoras."

Mr. Mowbray did not appear inclined to disprove the assertion; his lady's vivacity was wasted, and he continued grave and thoughtful. Tired of his laconic replies, Mrs. Mowbray again addressed Geraldine, who, starting from a reverie at the sound of her own name, and not having distinctly heard the observation, answered 'neglectingly, she knew not what.' Mrs. Mowbray, after fixing her eyes on her face for a few moments in silent amazement, burst

into a laugh. "Really," said she, "I begin to be of Shakspeare's opinion. A lunatic, a lover, and a poet, are of imagination all compact." Geraldine, concluding she had said something ridiculous, ashamed and oppressed, vainly tried to follow her example, and finished by bursting into tears. Mrs. Mowbray, shocked and surprised, made no further attempt at conversation; and in a short time they arrived in Portman-square.

CHAP. XXIV.

During their absence, letters had arrived from India. Georgiana wrote in wretched spirits. The magnificence by which she was surrounded formed but a feeble bar-barrier against the incursions of affliction: she was still doomed to share the common heritage of mortality. A spirit of querulous discontent mingled with the sadness expressed in her letter: she was sorrowing for the loss of an only child, and still more over her own declining health and fading beauty. This intelligence cost Mrs. Mowbray a few sighs, and half an hour's gravity; but she quickly consoled herself by repeating that it was written in a fit of '*les vapeurs noirs,*' to which indolent persons, in a hot climate, were peculiarly liable; hap-

pily recollected that Georgiana was frequently affected by them in England, nay even in France; and, at length, reasoned herself into the comfortable persuasion, that as the letters had been nearly five months in arriving, she was probably again in the full possession of beauty, health, and happiness. She then proceeded to examine the cards which had been left, and found one with Mr. Fullarton's name, which she tossed playfully to Geraldine.

"That is your property," said she. "This gentleman is one of the *super-excellent* persons of this world, with whom I never found favour; but you will be a favourite by inheritance." The name of Fullarton was associated in Geraldine's mind with the image of her mother, and the happy days of her childhood. Taking the card in silence, she hurried to her room, to conceal the tears which were again beginning to flow. On approaching the writing-table, her attention was arrested by a letter, which she at first flat-

tered herself was a penitential or explanatory one from Montague; but, on perceiving that the hand-writing was unknown to her, she opened it with trepidation, and found only a blank cover, containing various copies of verses, which, by a certain initial, she knew to be the effusions of Montague's muse. They were addressed to different divinities; and were all either glowing, ardent, or tender. She read them eagerly; curiosity, irritation, and grief struggling in her bosom. The titles ran thus: To Lesbia, on parting — To a cruel Beauty — To Sappho, with a sprig of pearls — To Delia, with a rose-bud — To Delia, with a full-blown rose — The Pangs of Absence, addressed to Sappho — The Dream, or Love's Vision — Recollection, or a Farewell to Delia.

Could this be possible? Was the tender homage, which she had so often received with feelings little short of rapture, thus lightly, thus indiscriminately offered? Were those soft and flowing numbers, which

seemed to breathe a love at once impassioned and refined, the hackneyed vehicles of idle and common-place gallantry? This conviction struck to the heart of Geraldine: deeply mortified, resentment mingled with her keen sense of disappointment. She concluded that the poems had been sent in a moment of irritation, by some fair rival, with whose affections he had trifled. She felt indeed, that not thus could she have avenged the wrong. Montague was still so dear to her, that she would willingly, if possible, have shielded his name from the slightest reproach; and it was to her a source of severe regret, that his character must suffer in the estimation of those to whom the cause of their separation was unfolded. She had been proud of Montague's talents and virtues; he had been the idol to whom she had delightedly bowed; and though she had discovered that this god of her idolatry was frail and mutable, she could not at once pluck the image from its enshrined sanctuary, and cast it out to cold

and public contempt. After many vain efforts, the following letter, inclosing the poems, was sent to Montague: —

" *To Montague Mowbray, Esq.*

" After the occurrences of the last few days, you will not, I think, be surprised at the resolution I have formed of releasing you from all engagements with me. I shall immediately announce to our mutual friends, that henceforward we are both free. This decision will probably be a relief to you; it will spare you the farther degradation of professing an interest which you have ceased to feel. I will not forfeit my ingenuousness by affecting an indifference towards you, to which I must long be a stranger; for time alone can mitigate the anguish I feel, in renouncing you for ever. Many endearing recollections will long cling to my memory, and many tender emotions be busy in my heart. You were the friend of my childhood, and lately you have been all I most loved and admired on earth. Do

not mistake me, or imagine for a moment, that I design by this acknowledgment, to rekindle your tenderness. It would now be unavailing; for where or what is the talisman which could again inspire me with confidence in your character. The love and the virtues I trusted in have proved but bright illusions; and the sentiments which they excited though they will not vanish as suddenly, will surely and gradually die away. The enclosed poems were not intended to meet my eye, and I regret that they have done so; but my resolution was adopted before I saw them; and though they have furnished me with still stronger reasons for our separation, I hope you will believe that I dissolve our engagement without bitterness of feeling; and that your happiness can never cease to be dear to

Your affectionate

"GERALDINE."

CHAP. XXV.

Mrs. Mowbray had not been an attentive observer of the change in Montague's manner, and the depression of Geraldine's spirits; and as soon as she ascertained that her son was at home, sought an interview with him. To avoid interruption, she went to his apartment; he was striding rapidly across the room, with an expression of vexation and perplexity in his countenance.

"My dear Montague," said Mrs. Mowbray, seating herself, "you are doubtless surprised at this visit from me; but I do really long for a peep behind the curtain: I hope it will not be quite as fatal as Fatima's peep into the blue chamber. Pray what is this *démêlé* between you and Geraldine?"

"I know of no *démêlé* ma'am," replied Montague, coldly; "Geraldine's manner to me has been very distant and reserved for the last few days; but she is a woman, and privileged, I suppose, to be capricious."

"And her *preux chevalier*, is a man; and privileged I suppose to be unfaithful," retorted Mrs. Mowbray. "However well disposed, Geraldine may be to play the part of Griselda after marriage, it is scarcely reasonable to expect that she will act it quietly and obediently before."

"I require no sacrifices from Geraldine," said Montague; "and why should she exact them from me? because I am engaged to her, may I not admire what is lovely and attractive in another?"

"It is really a great pity," said Mrs. Mowbray, "that the oriental custom of having half a dozen wives, does not prevail in England. It would save a world of jealousies and heart-aches; but until an act of parliament to that effect has

passed, I am afraid you will find that a wife *elect*, at any rate, expects whole and sole possession of the heart."

"Jealousy is tormenting beyond endurance," exclaimed Montague; "and degrades alike her who feels, and him for whom it is felt."

"Nothing can be more true or more logical," returned Mrs. Mowbray; "but it is an infirmity to which mortal, and especially female nature is rather prone; and, to speak candidly, I do not think that trifles light as air, have kindled this troublesome feeling in Geraldine's mind. Your warm defence of Mrs. Dareville and subsequent visit to her, if not acts of positive treason and disloyalty to your liege lady, were, to say the least, extremely *mal à propos.*"

"Don't mention her name," said Montague, striding still more rapidly about the room. "Can you believe that Edmund Wentworth's story is true,—absolutely

true, and that this finished coquette is about to marry Lord William Glenmore?"

"And if she were about to marry the Emperor of Morocco, or the King of Otaheite, what difference could it make to you? You did not, I presume, intend to marry her yourself?"

"Oh! who would not feel, who would not lament, the degradation of so lovely, so fascinating a creature? And is it not degradation to marry a man, she despises, for the sake of his rent-roll and coronet?"

"Degradation!" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray. "This is rather too absurd, Montague. To be a Viscountess, and mistress of twenty thousand a-year, is as little like degradation as any thing I know."

"Moral degradation, I am sure, it is," said Montague.

"Do, pray," said Mrs. Mowbray, laughing, "leave Mrs. Dareville's dignity and morals in her own keeping. Quixote as you are, I think them quite as safe as in yours."

"She is a practised, systematic deceiver," said Montague; "and yet who could have suspected it? When falsehood looks so like truth, who could detect it? but I have done with her."

"Or rather, she has done with you, I suppose," said Mrs. Mowbray. "I wish, with all my heart, you may not have managed matters, like the dog in the fable, — lost the substance in grasping the shadow."

"Geraldine has no reasonable ground for jealousy with respect to Mrs. Dareville," said Montague. "My attachment to her"—

"Was purely Platonic, of course," said Mrs. Mowbray. "Can any one doubt it who understands any thing of human feelings and passions?"

"I assure you," said Montague, earnestly —

"Oh! don't trouble yourself to assure me," interrupted Mrs. Mowbray. "I am not going to play the moralist. But what

are all these?" continued she, turning towards the table: "they have prodigiously the air of long bills; and, I am afraid, you will find them not so easily done with as Mrs. Dareville."

Montague sighed; paced still quicker up and down the room; and then exclaimed —

"I believe my good genius has forsaken me: I have entangled myself in a pretty labyrinth. To say the truth, for the last two or three months, I have been playing the fool."

"And you find it rather expensive, I imagine," said Mrs. Mowbray.

"These bills, to be sure," continued Montague, "contain the *most rascally* charges."

"Very possibly," replied Mrs. Mowbray; "but I have remarked that tradespeople, whom young men employ, frequently undergo a sudden metamorphosis. They are transformed from the most obliging fellows in the world into rascals, the

moment they send in their bills; but, rascals as they are, they must nevertheless be paid."

" *How*, I know not," said Montague: " without my father's knowledge and assistance, it will be impossible; and to submit such bills to his inspection — to hear his cutting sarcastic remarks — by Heaven! I would rather be in the grasp of a bailiff at once."

" No one plays the fool with impunity, Montague," said Mrs. Mowbray; "but, unless you decide upon the bailiff, perhaps my services with your father may be of some use."

The conversation was here interrupted by a tap at the door; and Geraldine's letter was handed to Montague. He tore it open. The poems were scattered in various directions on the carpet. Mrs. Mowbray quietly picked them up, whilst Montague was engaged with his letter.

" She renounces me," said he, throwing it down, in great perturbation, after a rapid perusal; " and without an effort;

with such insufferable coldness; however, let her be free. She knows nothing of love. She is incapable of feeling it."

"She does not understand your sort of love, indeed, Montague," said Mrs. Mowbray, still looking over the poems; "for yours seems to be 'careless love, such as kindleth hearts that rove.' Pray which of your fair favourites has done you this service?"

Montague snatched up the poems; pronounced himself to be a fool — a madman; read Geraldine's letter again; and then, with a deep sigh, put it into Mrs. Mowbray's hand.

"Geraldine inherits more of her mother's decision of character than I calculated upon," said she, attentively considering the letter; "but, I hope this mischief is not irreparable. You had better go down to Woodlands, and leave the management of your affairs for the present in my hands. I shall be a most bungling deputy, indeed, if they do not flourish rather more than in

yours; but it will require some skill to disentangle the web you have woven, and to quiet the various claimants you have so ingeniously secured for your heart and your purse. However, I am not given to despair; courage and stratagem combined will do much. Take my advice: go out of town; leave the Lesbias and Sapphos to console themselves as they may; and trust to my influence with your father and Geraldine."

Montague, thoroughly dispirited, out of humour with himself and the whole world, offered no opposition to this plan; and before the dinner-hour arrived, was on his road to Hampshire.

CHAP. XXVI.

GERALDINE, having accomplished her letter, passed at least an hour in considering whether she could command her feelings sufficiently to be present as usual at dinner. One moment, she was all courage; the next, all tremor: but finding her agitation increase as the time approached, she sent a message to Mrs. Mowbray, pleading her head-ache, and excusing herself from appearing.

This was precisely the opening desired by that lady. She repaired immediately to Geraldine's chamber, and commenced the attack.

"Tell me candidly, my dear," said she, "is this terrible head-ache of yours, a real, genuine head-ache, and am I to send for

Dr. Baillie, tie up the knocker, muffle the bells, and prepare for a fever? or is it a mere *ruse de guerre*, or rather a *ruse d'amour?*"

Geraldine acknowledged, that independently of a very oppressive head-ache, the agitation of her spirits rendered the quiet of her own apartment desirable.

"Yes, yes; I find I was not mistaken," exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray; "you know it was long ago discovered that there is an ostensible, as well as a real motive, for every human action; but you may very safely join us at dinner; for Montague, the discarded delinquent, is gone to do penance at Woodlands, and wait for an act of grace from his fair lady; to carve her name on every tree, and whisper it to every breeze."

Geraldine, prepared for the sportiveness of Mrs. Mowbray's manner, coldly replied, "that it was quite uncertain what name the caprice of the moment would render most dear to him; but that her heart was not yet sufficiently familiar with the idea of his inconstancy, to talk of it playfully."

"And is it possible, my dear Geraldine," exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray, "that you can for a moment think, or talk of it seriously. Mere *badinage*, the frolic of an idle hour, which must for ever have remained unknown, had it not been recorded by his vanity as a poet. Trust me, my dear, when you know as much of human nature and the ways of this world as I do, you will neither be surprised nor shocked at these little *affaires de cœur*; this sort of gallantry, which, as La Fontaine said upon another occasion, "*est peu de chose quand on le sait, et rien quand on ne le sait pas.*"

Geraldine looked down with a deep blush. She had never been so fully sensible of the deficiency of Mrs. Mowbray's system of morals; and she listened with an embarrassment amounting to confusion. These, then, were the principles — this the language, of a fashionable mother, a woman of the world.

"Montague, to be sure," continued Mrs. Mowbray, "has proved himself neither

a saint nor an angel; but then they are to be looked for in heaven, not on earth."

"Without expecting to meet with either," said Geraldine, "it is surely not too extravagant to hope, that stability of principle and consistency may be found among mortals. Can there be the slightest hope of happiness without them? I believe there is a great deal of truth in that aphorism of Lavater's,—"You can depend upon no man—upon no friend, but him who can depend upon himself."

"How I hate aphorisms!" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray: "little formal, pungent, waspish, self-evident things: never quote them, Geraldine; none but cold-hearted people ever quote aphorisms."

Geraldine said with a sigh, "that she began to think, that in such a world as this, it would be rather a privilege to be cold-hearted.

"Ah! it is quite natural that you should feel as you do," said Mrs Mowbray. "Montague appeared to you bright and dazzling,

as the sun in the heavens; but because curious observers have discovered spots on his disk, and he is sometimes shrouded in clouds, would it be fair to conclude that he will never again shine forth in full beauty. Depend upon it, my dear, the sun of your little world will re-appear: there will be a few clouds, and showers, and beams, and rainbows, and at length it will again be seen in all its dazzling brilliancy."

Geraldine felt that metaphor was not reasoning; and that with Mrs. Mowbray's light principles, it was scarcely possible she could enter into her feelings.

"I acknowledge my weakness," said she. "I still love Montague, but too fondly; but to marry a man whom I have ceased to respect or esteem, would be worse than weakness."

"Respect and esteem!" repeated Mrs. Mowbray; "really, my dear creature, I cannot help thinking of the mountain and the mouse, or 'Much ado about Nothing.' These little peccadilloes are not worth

notice. As to Mrs. Dareville, I have no doubt she played the part of the syren; and real living modern men are as unlike Ulysses, as possible: and as to all the rest, I dare say some envious rival got hold of Montague's common-place book, and copied these effusions, which, after all, mean nothing at all. You might as well be jealous of the muses,—old coquettes of a thousand years' standing."

Geraldine smiled involuntarily; but continued to parry Mrs. Mowbray's wit.

"Montague had the power of explaining away, or disavowing these poems," said she, "and he has done neither. He has, at least, too much honour to deny the truth. He may surprise, grieve, and disappoint me," continued she, in a faltering tone; "but he would not stoop to deceive me."

"And how do you reward his candour?" said Mrs. Mowbray: "had he exercised a little more worldly wisdom, or common policy, he might still have appeared im-

maculate in your eyes; but he never did understand that maxim properly. '*Tous les verités, ne sont pas bons, à dire.*' He is a vast deal too candid, too sincere; his sincerity is quite as inconvenient as his impetuosity."

Geraldine again pondered in silence over the latitudinarian morality of Mrs. Mowbray. The force of example had not destroyed that reverence for truth, which had been cherished with peculiar care in her childhood.

"Yes, I see," said Mrs. Mowbray, interpreting her looks; "I see you are going to talk to me of the beauty and simplicity of truth; but don't you know, that virtues carried to excess, become vices, and have the most mischievous effect. Truth, is a very majestic personage, and makes a grand figure in moral essays and didactic poems; but she is much too stately and formal, to be employed on every occasion. One is really obliged to cut her now and then, like the rest of one's old-fashioned

acquaintance. Good nature, good breeding, good sense, require it. You need not shake your head, Geraldine; a shake of the head is no argument."

"Your sophistry may bewilder, but it does not convince me," said Geraldine. "You try in vain, with all your ingenuity, to make the worse appear the better reason."

"Experience will convince you of the justice of my reasoning," persisted Mrs. Mowbray.

"Oh! no my dear aunt," exclaimed Geraldine, warmly; "experience is more likely to discover its errors."

"You will allow," replied Mrs. Mowbray, "that I must be more familiar with the test of experience than yourself; and I assure you, there is not a more ridiculous, absurd, preposterous habit, for a person of any fashion, than a stiff, stark, punctilious, overstrained veracity. It is the most kind, benevolent thing in the world, to tell a *white lie,* now and then; there is no living without it: you, who pique yourself upon

not telling them, are obliged to act them every day of your life. However, we have wandered, I know not how, from love and constancy, to truth and falsehood. Now *apropos* to love. As to your giving up Montague, that is a mere joke. You have asserted your own dignity very properly, and prudently; written a very flourishing letter, full of decorum and propriety; and now, you have nothing to do, but to relent, and smile, and look gracious: so set about it, my dear, in the prettiest way you can devise; and, to give you an opportunity of settling how it is to be managed, with most grace and effect, I will leave you in peace, and report your head-ache properly to Mr. Mowbray."

CHAP. XXVII.

Mrs. Mowbray, though she talked thus lightly and gaily of the expected reconciliation, did not feel the confidence she affected. There was an expression of sadness in Geraldine's countenance, which indicated that hope had deserted her heart; that the conviction of Montague's instability of character, had penetrated it too deeply to be effaced; and while she acknowledged the power of love, she appeared resolved to combat it.

Mrs. Mowbray distrusted her own powers on this occasion; but she resolved to exert them to the utmost. The result of these efforts was detailed in the following letter to Montague, a few days after he left town.

"My dear Montague,

"It is not in mortals to command success; but, if any mortal ever deserved it, it is *I*, Georgiana Mowbray! My exertions in your service, since we separated, have been unremitting, indefatigable. I have brought all my artillery into the field; wit, eloquence, and policy have been alternately at work. I dined *tête a tête* with your father, the day you left town, and, *apropos* to Geraldine's head-ache, revealed to him the flourishing state of your love-affairs. You never saw a man look more like a statue: neither surprise nor emotion, were visible in his countenance; not a muscle moved; if he had worn, a '*masque de fer*,' it could not have expressed less. After a short pause, he reminded me of the well-known answer of the French merchants to Colbert, when he asked them what he could do to promote the interests of commerce: It was 'do nothing.' He recommended this to me as an excellent maxim in love-affairs. I told him that I by no means

wished to entangle him in the mazes and labyrinths of Cupid; the golden, charmed, guiding clue, was of too delicate a texture for his rough management; that I would undertake to settle the state of your heart; but that I should be obliged to him to lend me his ear upon another point, the state of your purse. I prefaced my explanation, by observing that prudence was not the cardinal virtue of young men, and without attempting to unravel the history, and mystery of your debts, I rushed courageously at once to the point, mentioned their amount, and requested his counsel and assistance. He desired to see the bills, and they afforded him so charming an opportunity of making a variety of sarcastic, clever observations; they illustrated so admirably his favourite maxim that one half of mankind are fools, and the other knaves, that he grew quite good humoured, and with a little manœuvring on my part, glided quietly into a consideration of '*ways and means*.' After some curious

discussion, it was resolved that these debts should be liquidated upon certain conditions: First, that you should remove as speedily as possible from the influence of 'Lesbia's touching voice, and Sappho's beaming eyes,' which you were prudent enough to celebrate in such melting measures: next, that you should study the 'golden laws of love,' which, if I remember rightly, recommend —

> A simple heart, a single eye,
> A true and constant tongue:

and, that you may have an opportunity of accomplishing this, we wish you to leave England for a few months. A year ago, you were half wild to visit the blue seas and bright isles of Greece. Now, you are at liberty to invoke the shade of Homer, and poetise over the tomb of Achilles, as soon as you please. I think the form of Geraldine will haunt you in that lovely land; for certainly she is cousin-german to Venus and the Graces. By-the-by, she

has been far less tractable than your father on this occasion. The settled purpose of her soul is to give you up. I have laughed at her, and reasoned with her, in vain. Neither raillery nor pathos have been effectual; and yet a thousand little circumstances convince me that her heart is as much yours as ever. It is evidently a severe struggle; but she seems to have imbibed a sort of horror of what I call badinage, and she calls inconstancy. She blushes as virtuously at my worldly wisdom, as Margaret Campbell could have done; and seems determined to think 'a fair young knight who loves, and who rides away,' unworthy of future favour.

" I do not know whether the arrival of Mr. Fullarton is in your favour or not. He has had several private interviews with Geraldine, towards whom his manner is quite paternal. After these confabulations, I always fancy that he has the air of a father confessor, and she of a penitent. I think him upon the whole (like Mr. Maitland) a very

gentlemanly sort of *methodist*, just fit to live upon the earth in the time of the millenium; trying to make men and women saints and angels before their time. Poor man! I am afraid he will find it labour in vain. Like the cat, metamorphosed into a lady, who sprang from her lover to listen to a mouse, natural feelings will break forth. Human nature will be human nature, in spite of reformists; and, after all, why do they trouble themselves? 'Whatever is, is right.' I think a temporary separation from England and Geraldine will be advantageous to you. A great many pretty tender fears for your safety may be excited: and the parting moment has been the ordeal of true love from time immemorial:

> For love, at other times suppress'd,
> Is all betray'd at this;

at least, so says a competent judge of these delicate affairs.—To be serious; I should be really grieved if this desirable match were ultimately broken off. Your inconstancy

is not without precedent; but your want of prudence and policy is absolutely irritating. Another time, when you are disposed to 'sport an hour with beauty's chain,' pray, be discreet enough not to let the secret of your revels transpire. We shall meet, in a few days, at Woodlands; so I shall not say adieu, but *au revoir*.

Your affectionate,

"G. MOWBRAY."

CHAP. XXVIII.

THE return of Mr. Fullarton occurred at a moment when Geraldine's mind was in a critical state. Montague, though no longer faithful, was still beloved; and her heart, driven from its resting-place, could find no repose. A sense of the frivolity and unprofitableness of her present life was stealing over her mind, and an awakening conscience and aching heart combined their disquieting power. Restless and unhappy, she felt desirous of escaping from herself; and, with a vague resolution of listening to the reproofs of conscience, at 'a more convenient season,' sought relief, where it was never yet found, in the busy idleness of the world of fashion. She accompanied Mrs. Mowbray in all her gay engagements,

which multiplied as the time appointed for their return to Woodlands approached. Fanny had engaged to pass the last fortnight of their London visit in Portman-square; and she seemed to dread even a moment's solitude. On her arrival, she told Geraldine, that Mr. Spenser was in Warwickshire, for the ostensible purpose of making improvements in his estate, and for the real one, she imagined, of making love to the wives and daughters of his tenants. This was said, with a smile, in a careless tone; and, in answer to a look of sympathy from Geraldine she exclaimed —

"Don't trouble yourself, my dear, to look behind the mask; it will drop off one of these days. Then will be the moment to pity and moralise: in the interim, '*il faut faire passer le tems,*' flirting, dancing, driving; any thing but thinking will suit me."

This system was pursued. Of these flirting, dancing, driving parties, Geraldine made one; but her heart was far

away: she shared, without enjoying them. Fanny's society offered irresistible attractions to the gay and idle of both sexes; and the throng of morning visitors, in Portman-square, generally increased during her visits there. After the dispersion of one of these levees, Fanny, who had been unusually brilliant, threw herself upon a couch, exclaiming —

"It is heavy work, Geraldine, to keep up this farce with spirit. The slave, who toils without hope or reward, need not envy me my feelings."

"But why make such incessant, such needless exertions?" asked Geraldine. "Your health and life will waste away under them."

"The sooner the better," replied Fanny, in a tone of deep despondency.

"My dear Fanny," exclaimed Geraldine, inexpressibly shocked, and taking her hand affectionately, "have you no one left in the world to love or care for?"

Fanny snatched her hand hastily away,

covered her face for some minutes, and then, suddenly starting up, abruptly exclaimed, "Come—now for Bond-street, or the Park—for any place—any thing, but tenderness and sentiment."

At this moment Mr. Fullarton was announced. Fanny's countenance was instantly metamorphosed. She resumed the mask.

"Welcome to England, my dear Sir," said she, in a gay tone.

"And most welcome to me," added Geraldine, extending her hand with affectionate eagerness; "how often have I longed for this day."

After the usual enquiries had been exchanged, Mr. Fullarton seated himself between them, and fixing his eyes earnestly on Geraldine, "pardon my looking at you so intently," said he; "but I can scarcely realise the alteration which three years have made in your person."

"Ah! Mr. Fullarton," exclaimed Fanny, shaking her head, "I perceive that even

France has done little for you. What man, except yourself, would have lost so happy an opportunity of complimenting a young lady. Improvement would have been but a tame word; but alteration, plain, unqualified alteration, — oh! it is insufferable."

"When I tell you, that though no longer Fanny Mowbray, you are precisely the same Fanny whom I parted with three years ago; will it be a compliment or no?" said Mr. Fullarton, smiling.

A shade of sadness for a moment, clouded Fanny's brow, at this allusion to the past; but quickly recovering herself, she gaily replied —

"Oh! a compliment, decidedly; three years ago, I used to be told, half a dozen times a day, that I was a bewitching creature; and as a woman, would rather be bewitching than any thing else; think how charming it must be to me, to hear that I am as resistless as ever. You have really been betrayed into a compliment. I shall enter it into my tablets immediately; for I

should as soon have expected one from 'Timon the Man-hater.'"

"Do you think then, that I resemble him in my feelings, either towards man or womankind?"

"Yes, rather," replied Fanny; "especially as it respects one class. You know you hate idleness, and luxury, and dissipation; all, in short, that we call pleasure. Therefore, we who live, and move, and breathe in a fashionable atmosphere, must be to you objects of aversion or contempt."

"Of pity, of disapprobation," said Mr. Fullarton; "but if you knew any thing of the affectionate interest, the expansive benevolence inspired by a Christian spirit, you would perceive how impossible it is, that I should indulge either aversion or contempt. I should indeed like to persuade you to renounce what you call pleasure; but then it is only that I might introduce you to happiness, and I think you would find the exchange worth making."

A melancholy expression stole over the

countenance of Geraldine; for she felt the truth of the distinction: but Fanny, as usual parried it immediately.

"As to happiness, my dear sir," said she, "all the sages and moralists I ever heard of, tell us she is not to be found on earth; why then trouble ourselves to seek her? Now, pleasure smiles, and offers her gifts and toys so freely, so gracefully, that there is no resisting them."

"But she has nothing better than toys to offer," said Mr. Fullarton.

"And who can live without them?" rejoined Fanny: "young and old, grave and gay, must have their toys. My father and mother, for instance, are gone this morning to a sale; my father tempted by curious books, my mother by curious china! Since you left England, a new fashion has arisen; and now, instead of lamenting over our sins, if you like to vary the subject, you may lament over the decline and fall of our taste. Instead of Grecian statues, we now ornament our

houses, (like that Sicilian nobleman Brydone talks of,) with all the ugly monsters we can collect; we can't live without jars, and beakers, Josses, and Mandarins."

Fanny piqued herself upon the dexterity with which she contrived to ward off all serious conversation: she could always detect the first gathering of the cloud, and stood prepared, like Franklin with his metallic rod, to direct it as she pleased. She professed to have made up her mind never to hear people *prose* over truths, which every one knew, and no one heeded.

Mr. Fullarton turned from her to contemplate Geraldine, for whom he felt peculiar interest and affection. The disquietude which might be traced amidst the beauty of her countenance and the restlessness appearing through the soft grace of her manner, did not escape his attention. She seemed a lovely flower transplanted into a rich, but ungenial soil; graceful and luxuriant rather than healthy and vigorous. Wishing to ascertain the nature of her pre-

sent feelings, habits, and pursuits, he became, for her sake, a frequent guest in Portman-square; and perceived with regret, though without surprise, the mischievous effects, which had arisen from the contagion of example, and the influence of unpropitious circumstances. But, though the timid, simple, conscientious girl he remembered, was metamorphosed into a woman of fashion, and becoming enslaved to the world, she did not wear her fetters contentedly: she did not glory in her bondage, or contemplate the glittering chains with delight. She appeared spellbound in the magic circle of fashion and folly; but Mr. Fullarton indulged a secret hope that the warning voice of a friend might dissolve the enchantment, might rouse the energies of her mind, and direct them to higher purposes and nobler views. Anxious to point out the dangers by which she was encircled; he made an appeal to her in the following letter.

" *To Miss Beresford.*

" It is so difficult, my dear young lady, to secure a quiet half hour for conversation, amidst the rapid succession of engagements which consume your time, that I have adopted this mode of addressing you, on a subject, upon which it is equally my duty to speak, and your interest to listen.

" A man of the world, perhaps, to whom exterior grace and loveliness are all in all, would view with delight the change effected in your person, habits, and feelings, during the interval of a few years. A judicious friend, who looks beyond the mere surface of things, would behold it with more interest than pleasure; but a Christian minister, who considers life as a precious talent entrusted to us to be employed and improved, and time as the portal to eternity, must contemplate it with regret and alarm.

" We are all but too much inclined to indulge the dreams of hope and fancy, and

in defiance of disappointment and experience, I have not yet done with them.

" I had foolishly cherished a hope, that the daily lessons to which you once listened, —the bright example you once contemplated, would have produced a permanent effect on your mind; that they would not have vanished from your memory like an airy dream, without leaving a trace behind.

" That you have been surrounded by temptations, placed in a region where there was much to counteract, and nothing to fortify religious principle, I am quite ready to allow.

" I call to mind the general tendency to corruption, which weighs down the human heart, and the peculiar facility of youth; and I am disposed to feel and judge tenderly: but, if conscience has been gradually and insensibly lulled into security, it is time to awaken its energies. Remember, that while the centinel slumbers on his post, the citadel may be taken.

"Your present indifference to religion, your neglect of its holy duties, and sacred claims, cannot lessen its authority, or diminish an iota of your own awful responsibility.

"Its promises still shine in all their glorious brightness; its denunciations remain equally fearful and terrible. An immortal soul is of infinite value in the sight of saints and angels, though its infatuated possessor may neglect or undervalue the rich treasure.

"You do not, I suppose, question the truth of Christianity. You have not renounced all 'the nurse, and all the priest had taught;' but do you not practically disclaim it? — can you disguise from yourself, that you are living without God in the world? Whether you are actuated by the principle of self-gratification, or impelled by the force of example, is of little moment; the effect is the same. You are forsaking the fountain of living water, for a polluted

and shallow stream, which will fail you in the hour of need.

"And for what are you renouncing the inestimable privileges, the unfailing consolations, the ultimate triumphs of a Christian?—for pleasures which exhaust more than they recreate the spirits; for scenes which are rather the refuge of idleness than the centre of enjoyment, which, after the excitation of novelty has subsided, offer little to gratify the taste, and less to exercise the intellect.

"Perhaps you have entered into a sort of compromise with your conscience; you have submitted to the ideal necessity of circumstances; you propose to begin your education for eternity at some distant period. Like a thousand others, religion may occupy a remote corner of your map of life; but can any thing be more delusive, more fallacious, more fatal, than such reasoning: it combines the utmost weakness with the highest presumption. Strange,

that the fragility of health, of reason, of life itself, can be forgotten by a reasonable and accountable being!

"I conjure you, my dear Geraldine, while it is yet time, 'think of these things.' Pause amidst your gay and brilliant career. A life passed in incessant dissipation, in the eternal fritter of frivolous society, is unworthy the dignity of an intellectual creature; how much, then, is it beneath the high destination of an immortal one—of one who is not her own, but 'bought with a price.'

"Perhaps your understanding may be so unhappily warped by the opinions and sentiments of those around you, that you may regard this as the language of bigotry or enthusiasm. You may ask, why you should be called upon to renounce the pleasures suited to your age and station. You may accuse me of wishing to contract the sphere of your innocent enjoyments: but are those enjoyments innocent, which leave 'neither room for nor thought, nor time

for prayer;' which exclude almost from your recollection, your Creator, your Benefactor, your Redeemer; that God, who has emphatically said, 'My Son, give me thy heart;' whom you are commanded to love with all your soul, with all your strength. Do not deceive yourself; if excessive dissipation thus involve you in a constant neglect of your highest duties, it can be no venial error. I implore you, from this moment, to make a stand: reflect upon the force of habit, and remember that every day and hour passed in bondage to the world, will render escape more difficult. Youth, inexperience, timidity, in some degree palliate the sinful compliances into which you have been betrayed; but the warning you now receive, if fruitless, will be registered against you.

"No doubt, when first you became a guest at Woodlands, you witnessed the irreligious habits of the family with astonishment; you conformed to them with fear and repugnance: but the lapse of a few months

softened down repugnance into reluctance, and reluctance was gradually exchanged for acquiescence, if not for approbation. Like them, you are now a stranger to the house of prayer; your Sabbaths, like theirs, are not only unhallowed but profaned by idle amusements, by splendid galas, and crowded concerts, in which you bear your part apparently without scruple or regret. But can this be really the case? Is not the still small voice of conscience occasionally heard? Does it not sometimes excite a momentary pang, or extort a transient resolution? Can a mother's holy wish, her earnest prayers, her labour of love, be utterly unavailing? Pardon my awakening mournful recollections, but let me recal her image to your mind. Like you, she was young and lovely; like you, she mingled in the great and gay world: but with what holy circumspection did she tread the path of life; how anxiously did she avoid even the appearance of evil; her active unobtrusive piety displayed itself, not in invective against the world around her, but in bound-

less charity, in systematic benevolence, in tempered zeal. Rich and multiplied were her harmless enjoyments. Oh! do not for a moment believe the sphere of a Christian's joys to be contracted and narrow. A Christian is not excluded from the charms of friendship, the endearments of love, the sweets of domestic tenderness; he is not excluded from the pursuit of literature and the fine arts; those harmless unimpeachable pleasures, which refine and chasten the mind. The riches of imagination, the treasures of genius, the graces of taste, lie open to him: he rejoices in the magnificence of nature; in the varied wonders of the creation. He lives in the exercise of hope, of joy, of gratitude, of love to God, of good-will to man; cherishing all generous, amiable, benevolent affections; diffusing happiness, and enjoying that 'peace which passeth all understanding.'

"That I may one day see you thus blessing and blest, is the fervent and daily prayer of Your affectionate friend,

"R. FULLARTON."

This letter made a powerful impression on Geraldine: it quickened the reproaches of her conscience; and though, with the dexterous sophistry so natural to the human heart, she endeavoured to persuade herself that she had yielded to necessity rather than inclination; the light of truth flashed upon her mind with a force not to be resisted. In vain she pleaded the practise and example of those around her; powerful as their effect had been upon her conduct, they were but dust in the balance, when compared with the simple, express, authoritative command of God. In vain she tried to solace herself with the negative merit of having done no harm; to dwell with convenient humility upon her own insignificance. Conscience was not slow in detecting these subterfuges. She was compelled to acknowledge, that the example of every individual, is of importance in the circle in which that individual moves; and Geraldine felt with bitter regret, that she had dishonoured the pure principles in

which she had been educated, by weak compliances, and culpable negligence. She reflected, that her time and abundant resources, had been wasted in trifling, or selfish gratifications; and though, from a natural impulse of compassion, she had relieved the misery which forced itself on her attention, she had been too idly busy to practise that systematic, useful, enlarged benevolence, which requires self-denial and activity, and is one of the loveliest fruits of Christian love. A humiliating conviction of her own weakness, mingled with regret for the past, and fears for the future, and the resolution she now formed, of 'remembering her Creator, in the days of her youth,' was accompanied with that salutary feeling of self distrust, which excites watchfulness, and fosters humility. Till within a short time, the gay path she was treading appeared bright with sunshine and flowers; but she now began to discern the lurking thorn and secret pitfall. From the moment that her

confidence in Montague had ceased, every brilliant *fête*, at which she had been present, had appeared, rather like a fair pageant, to be gazed at for a moment, than a real scene in which she had any concern. In the midst of a smiling and courteous crowd, she had felt forlorn and solitary, and, night after night, had returned home with a wearied frame, exhausted spirits, and a heavy heart. With the feelings excited by her disappointed hopes, now mingled convictions of a more serious nature; and her sense of the inestimable value of time, rendered its constant sacrifice to heartless crowds, irksome, and almost insufferable.

Again and again she read Mr. Fullarton's letter; and, at every perusal, the momentous subjects upon which it touched excited deeper interest and stronger emotion.

Some days elapsed, before she summoned courage to answer it; but, anxious to convince him that she was neither ungrateful for his advice, nor indifferent to

the subject of it, she thus acknowledged his kindness: —

" *To the Reverend R. Fullarton.*

" My dear Sir;

" I hope you will not imagine that to the many errors of which I have been guilty I add that of indifference to the solemn appeal contained in the letter with which you favoured me. If I could at all express the variety of feelings it has awakened, the emotion, the contrition it has excited, you would believe that it has not been made in vain.

" I have little to plead in excuse for the dereliction from duty to which you advert. The plea of ignorance I cannot offer; for I was early led into the path of duty, and familiarised with all that was fair and good. The dissipation and waste of time, which might have been venial errors in one less well-instructed, assume a deeper shade when the early advantages I enjoyed are considered.

"When I recollect and reflect upon my neglect of religious duties, I tremble, and feel astonished at my ingratitude and temerity. I stand self-condemned, convicted by my own conscience. The world, perhaps, would laugh at the feelings I am now avowing; but I cannot forget that our thoughts, words, and actions, are to be judged by a very different tribunal. I would tell you of the resolutions I have formed, if I were not checked by the depressing conviction of my weakness; but let me, at least, assure you, that I feel an earnest desire to think and to do what is right, and that I value your counsel and friendship, as a miser would a newly discovered treasure. The dear example you bid me remember will ever be sacred in my eyes. Hopeless of attaining the rare perfection of such a character, I may yet, perhaps, though at an immeasurable distance, tread in her steps. It is far more easy to weep over the recollection of her love and tenderness, and

mourn her loss, than to imitate that pure and holy life so beautiful, and, alas! so brief.

Allow me, my dear Sir, to assure you of my gratitude, and of the high esteem and respect, with which I am,

Your obliged and affectionate,

"GERALDINE."

After the receipt of this letter, Mr. Fullarton obtained several private interviews with Geraldine. He wished to strengthen the impression he had made, and to stimulate her to exertion and perseverance. His language was gentle and persuasive, yet firm and energetic. He disdained to temporise; but without representing the Christian life as a sinecure in which every thing was to be enjoyed, and nothing performed, he sought to encourage and animate, rather than to [illegible] and depress. He reminded her, that regret for the past was useful only, as it influenced the future; and directed her to

seek the support she needed at that fountain, which can impart strength to the weak, and refreshment to the weary.

He urged her, in future, steadily to decline those engagements which she felt to be inconsistent with duty; and candidly to state her reasons to Mrs. Mowbray; observing that the raillery to which she would be exposed, and the solicitations she must resist, would be slight evils, compared with the advantages of increased leisure for important duties and intellectual pursuits.

Supposing her still engaged to Montague, he made some observations which drew from her an acknowledgment of their separation; and the reluctance, the anguish, with which she spoke, convinced him that the sacrifice had required no common effort.

Mr. Fullarton neither felt nor professed that sort of stoical Christianity, which requires the extinction rather than the subjugation of human feelings. He was satisfied with steady and sincere attempts to con-

troul and regulate them: he therefore listened with gentleness to Geraldine's blushing and hurried tale of her hopes and disappointments; soothing her by expressions of approbation and sympathy.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

Printed by Strahan and Spottiswoode,
Printers-Street, London